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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

“TO GET A JOB IN A BROADWAY CHORUS, GO INTO  
YOUR DANCE:” EDUCATION FOR CAREERS  
IN MUSICAL THEATRE DANCE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Lauran Stanis

College of Performing and Visual Arts  
School of Theatre Arts and Dance  
Dance Education

December 2019

This Thesis by: Lauran Stanis

Entitled: *“To Get a Job in a Broadway Chorus, Go into Your Dance.” Education for Careers in Musical Theatre Dance*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Masters in Arts in the College of Performing and Visual Arts in the School of Theatre and Dance, Program of Dance Education

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## ABSTRACT

Stanis, Lauran. *“To Get a Job in a Broadway Chorus, Go into Your Dance:” Education for Careers in Musical Theatre Dance*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 2019.

The purpose of this study was to identify necessary education and experiences for dancers who wish to pursue a career in musical theatre dance and identify the content dancers who want to pursue careers in musical theatre dance should be studying. In this project, two groups of individuals were surveyed about their education and experiences. These individuals were those with dance degrees, and those working professionally in musical theatre as dancers or choreographers. A total of 174 subjects participated in the study. Of these participants, ninety-two were dance degree holders and eighty-two were musical theatre dance professionals. Two surveys were designed and used to answer the questions of this research study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze data in this study.

An analysis of the data suggested there was a great variety in musical theatre dance content currently being offered in undergraduate dance programs. Some programs offered higher level course work in tap, jazz, and Broadway styles while other programs did not offer those genres at all. In addition to the dance technique offerings, dance history and composition and choreography courses included a wide range of content throughout different undergraduate programs. Even when Broadway dance styles were included in these courses, there was little consistency in content offered across different collegiate programs.

Based on answers to the survey questions, some but not all participants experienced high levels of career readiness for musical theatre dance professions after participation in undergraduate degree programs in dance, musical theatre programs, or with no degree at all. Thus, it seemed there was no clear educational path for musical theatre dancers. The great majority of participants in the study sought outside training and experiences to supplement their undergraduate education. The wide variety in educational programming and the different amounts of outside experience and training of participants led to the conclusion that the degree programs could not be credited for career success in musical theatre dance.

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the survey and a fairly high rate of completion. The number who completed the survey might have been higher if there had been a greater personal reason or benefit for participating. Limitations to the study included unintentional bias towards musical theatre dance professionals who participated in college programs. No data was collected about years active in professional careers or years in undergraduate programs. Participants placed themselves in either category of the survey—as dance degree holders or musical theatre dance professionals. The researcher did not require proof that responders had a degree in dance, or the level at which they worked professionally.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the people who helped me get to this point in my artistic journey.

My parents; Liz and Garry Stanis

My husband; Rob Watson

My experience; Every person who gave me an opportunity, performed with me, and collaborated with me. And, those who did not.

My purpose; For *“The kids in the line. You’re . . . every [dancer] who ever kicked up a heel in the chorus. Get out there in front, kid, and show ‘em what we can do!”*

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Goal of Thesis**

“Dance has become as vital as song to the makeup of the mature American musical. While styles of dance may change — from tap to modified ballet to jazz/show dance—dance itself has never been out of fashion” (Kislan 248). Performing on Broadway is viewed as a prestigious accomplishment for dancers. Only dancers with the highest technical ability and performance skills find themselves kicking up their heels in the chorus. As the genre of musical theatre has evolved since its inception, so have the requirements and expectations of its dancers. The focus of this thesis was to identify the necessary training and experiences that are vital for a dancer to achieve a professional career in musical theatre dance.

With early beginnings dating back to *The Black Crook* in 1866, American musical theatre is the combination of acting, singing, and dancing. Purely by accident, and because of a burned down theatre, a ballet company and a theatre company were forced to share a stage for the evening. “Whenever the melodrama began to drag, the girls rushed on and danced” (Flinn 81) with “little attempt to integrate the musical numbers into the plot” (Flinn 82). This accident ended up running for eighteen months and thus began what we now call the American musical theatre.

For many decades, “actors, singers, and dancers all rehearsed in separate rooms, with dancers consigned to the basement of the theatre” (Flinn 224). Many dances were

specialty acts and variety show numbers not necessarily centered around a theme or containing a plot. When ballet-trained dancer Agnes de Mille crossed genres to participate in musical theatre by choreographing *Oklahoma!*, musical theatre dance began to change. “Specialty numbers were all cut. Anything that didn’t advance the action was cut” (Flinn 226). “Instead of a high-kicking, tap-dancing chorus, de Mille presented American folk ballet” (Flinn 227). “The importance of the relationship between story and song and dance has helped bring about the decline of the once high-riding revue” (Green 3). Following the success of *Oklahoma!*, composer Richard Rodgers wrote in his autobiography, “Everyone suddenly became so ‘integration’ conscious, as if the idea of welding together song, story and dance had never been thought of before” (229).

Even though the art form of musical theatre had progressed, audiences still enjoyed the excitement and spectacle of dance numbers. “Many traditions of the pre-*Oklahoma!* theatre were still favored over the art and integration of the modern musical” (Flinn 269).

Ballets were considered so essential that they were injected into musical comedies whether they fit the plot or not. In fact, ballet became so common in the theater that within a few years the same critics who had praised the dance routines in *Oklahoma!* became almost ecstatic when leading players or a chorus line would break into an old, familiar tap routine. (Laufe 68)

“One season after *Oklahoma!*, twelve of the twenty-one new musicals featured some kind of ballet sequence” (Flinn 288). With this development, dance was being fully integrated into musical theatre.

Neither Robbins nor Bennett ever succumbed to the temptation to stage a musical in the old-fashioned style just to win uneducated admiration. With devoted artistry, both pursued the fullest integration of direction and choreography, driven by content. (Flinn 269)

As musical theatre choreography progressed, many choreographers “created dances out of personal style that grew and expanded throughout their careers. This approach created shows indelibly stamped with their look” (Flinn 297). These choreographers included Michael Kidd, Gower Champion, and Bob Fosse. Because their styles were unique, personal, and identifiable, they began to be taught specifically. Technically proficient dancers sought out training and classes to prepare for the stylistic challenge of these auditions.

“Today, dance assumes a more prominent place in the creative and interpretive process, often bearing dramatic and theatrical responsibilities equal to book, lyrics, and music” (Kislan 236). Dance continued to assert its power within the context of a musical. The inclusion of dance occurred to such an extent that a new variation of musical theatre began to be produced.

Genres are never static; and the American musical theatre is no exception, as it continues to mature and evolve, generating many new forms in the process. One such evolutionary offspring is the all-dance musical, a particular hybrid of concert dance and musical theatre, otherwise termed the “dansical.” (Stiehl iii)

The popularity and rise of the importance of dance on Broadway led the way to completely danced productions. While some of these productions were created by established Broadway director-choreographers, with complete storylines and intent, other productions simply capitalized on their success and produced more dance concert-like productions. Beginning with Bob Fosse’s production of *Dancin’* in 1978, and including *Jerome Robbins’ Broadway* as well as act two of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Song and Dance*, fully danced musicals took over Broadway. The “dansical is evidence of the choreographer having self-expressively evolved to an ultimate position of power and presence within the musical theatre genre” (Stiehl 11).

“The musical is an art form like any other, destined to change” (Flinn xiii). Over time, the once separate singing and dancing choruses became an ensemble that was required to do everything. Broadway star Kelli O’Hara stated, “I had no idea how much ‘dancing’ it would take to be on Broadway. Gone are the days of singers standing in the back” (Cramer vii). Broadway director and choreographer Warren Carlyle also observed that “shows have gotten smaller so that means that ensembles have gotten smaller. Furthermore, that means you can’t carry a person who only has one skillset. Everybody has to be able to say a line strongly and clearly and sing on pitch” (Cramer 82). The 2015 Broadway sensation *Hamilton*, choreographed by Andy Blankenbuehler, challenged its dancers and merged many styles by “incorporating everything from jazz to hip hop to swing to jitterbug” (Frischia 28).

One goal of this study was to examine the education and experiences required for building a career in musical theatre dance. As the art form continually progresses and changes, so do the skills and abilities necessary. By identifying the necessary training and experiences required for career readiness in musical theatre dance, the hope was to determine how best to ensure that dancers are put in the best possible position to succeed. Undergraduate education programs can and should be developed to provide dancers with the required training and experiences.

The essential questions addressed in this study were:

- Q1     What musical theatre dance content is currently being offered in undergraduate dance education programs?
- Q2     What courses should be included in an undergraduate dance education to improve career readiness for work in musical theatre?
- Q3     What education and experience do professional dancers working in musical theatre dance careers have that enables them to be effective?
- Q4     What curriculum should be included in an undergraduate dance program focused on preparing performers and choreographers for careers in professional musical theatre?

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify necessary education and experiences for dancers who wish to pursue a career in musical theatre dance and identify the course content they should be studying. In this project, the researcher surveyed two groups of individuals on their education and experiences: individuals with dance degrees, and individuals working professionally in musical theatre as dancers or choreographers. New York University's Jonathan Bernstein noted "Because the form is so rapidly shifting, it seems to me, you can be out of touch if you're not careful" (Gilroy 31).

"Lately the focus has been on ensembles, and choreographers like Christopher Wheeldon, pushing and pulling at the musical's boundaries. Susan Stroman's *Contact* and Twyla Tharp's *Movin' Out* made dance the main narrative vehicle" (Gold "Evolution of Dance" 20). The ballet heavy choreography for *An American in Paris* won Wheeldon his first Tony Award. Some Broadway productions assign dancers leading roles, while other productions require dancers to be more well-rounded. "Current Broadway hits call for dancers who can also sing and act—triple threats" (Kay "Triple Threat Training" 54).



By adding singing and acting to their performance skills, more is being expected of Broadway dancers than ever before.

Many dancers who seek careers as a musical theatre dancer do not know whether to pursue an undergraduate education in a dance program or a musical theatre program. “Serious dancers interested in musical theatre face a difficult choice when applying to college: Should you major in dance or musical theatre?” (Wingenroth 48). With the increasing expectation of having a higher level of dance technique, a dance program seems to be the obvious choice. But the inclusion of singing and acting demands can lead the dancer to wonder if their dance technique will survive four years of divided focus.

Broadway director-choreographer Rob Ashford, who has been nominated for the Tony Award for Best Choreography five times and received the honor for *Thoroughly Modern Millie* in 2002, received a degree in dance from Point Park University. He said, “I took every kind of class. I participated in ballet, tap, jazz, Dunham technique (a form of modern dance), and partnering. We had all that variety, so it was a great training ground” (Cramer 5).

In general, most dance courses focus on ballet, contemporary dance or musical theatre, although ethnic dance-forms from Flamenco to South Asian dance are increasingly turning up on college schedules. And although you will be aiming to excel in your chosen field of study, it is becoming more common for the career-minded dancer to study an additional major dance style to a professional level of proficiency. (Belingy and Byrne 31)

Dancing in Broadway musicals can include a variety of genres within one show. Many musicals are set in various time periods and locations that influence the social dance forms included and the dance style. Dance movement varies greatly from production to production. Dancers seeking careers in musical theatre need exposure to a variety of genres and styles to excel.

### *Dance Degree*

Musical theatre dancers who started their careers in the ballet world are “being hired for their technique, quick pick-up skills and in-depth partnering knowledge” (Kay “Swapping Stages” 46). But they have some work to do when trading in their pointe shoes for character shoes. Many have to “work on moving in a ‘pedestrian’ way” (Kay “Swapping Stages” 47). It can be challenging for many performers with concert dance training to create characters and embody ‘regular people’ in musical theatre (Kay “Swapping Stages” 47). Additionally, there are variations in professional norms, including audition protocol, headshot/resume differences, and varied rehearsal procedures.

The dancer who decided on enrolling in a dance degree program, was advised to not “forget about the singing and acting opportunities [available and take] . . . acting and voice classes at school or privately, participate in extracurricular theatre, and ask permission to take classes in the musical theatre department” (Wingenroth 49). This advice implies that not all dance and theatre programs integrate and allow students to enroll in courses outside their major program. Also, many dance programs have their own performance requirements and do not provide students enough free time for outside opportunities.

Another Broadway choreographer, Andy Blankenbuehler, also trained within a dance degree program. Best known for his Tony Award-winning choreography for *Hamilton*, Blankenbuehler has been nominated for five Best Choreography Tony Awards and has won three times. Blankenbuehler, who studied at Southern Methodist University, indicated it has “one of the strongest ballet and modern programs in the nation” (Cramer

27) and that “the technique classes were great for me because I had danced my whole life, but had really bad technique” (Cramer 27). The high level of technical ability and focused training are still important aspects of dancing at a Broadway caliber. However, Blankenbuehler left school after a year to pursue performing opportunities. His musical theatre success was not contingent on completing the undergraduate dance program.

The choreography in the interdisciplinary art of musical theater is a unique craft that cannot be addressed in the same manner as isolated dance works. While the aesthetic principles of form are vitally important in both dance genres, the choreography in the musical differs from concert dance in its objectives as it is wedded to book, lyric, and music. (Phillips 115)

Dance degrees traditionally include choreography and composition courses. In this study, the goal was also to identify which dance genres were being addressed in these courses and how or if musical theatre dance is being taught.

Dance has such a vast and wide-reaching history that many comprehensive texts have become more focused. One widely used text, Gayle Kassing’s *History of Dance*, only covers Broadway dancers and choreographers who experienced success in ballet or modern dance. Robbins, Tharp, and Bill T. Jones are included in her text, and (with the exception of Jones) their Broadway credits are noted and praised. However, jazz, tap, and musical theatre dance are not included in her book.

### *Musical Theatre Degree*

“While each musical theatre program has a different approach, all agree on one thing: The fact that musical theatre is changing is not really a change at all” (Gilroy 31). Those that choose to study in musical theatre programs often do not have the multitude of dance courses required to perform at a high level. Some programs do not include a dance audition for admission into their programs. Broadway director-choreographer Jerry

Mitchell attended the acting conservatory at Webster University, seeking a degree in musical theatre, but joined their dance company so he could perform (Cramer 140).

Mitchell's most recent project, *Pretty Woman*, hit Broadway in August 2018, and he has previously won the Tony Award for Best Choreography for *Kinky Boots* and *La Cage aux Folles*.

As a result, many musical theatre programs are looking to expand their dance course offerings. Baldwin Wallace University recently added a ballet boot camp to their Musical Theatre program (Gilroy 31). However, many musical theatre programs lack variety and rigor in their dance course offerings. Wingenroth's article warned that many musical theatre programs have slim dance offerings and encourage dancers to supplement their program with additional, outside training (49).

For the dancer who decides on a musical theatre program, "It is essential to find a musical theater program that will build on your dance training—but you don't want to fall back on it" (Wingenroth 49). Dancers cannot simply rely on their dance technique, but must continue to build other skills while refining their technique and movement style. Some dancers have found that a musical theatre degree program has changed their view of choreography. Reagan Ogle, an Elon University musical theatre major commented that, "through my acting classes I learned how to build my relationships through character. It gave me a new perspective on dance, coming at it from a storyteller's point of view" (Wingenroth 49).

Though various related texts exist such as comprehensive musical theatre history books, biographies of Broadway choreographers, and "show bibles" from past productions, there is currently no text for a musical theatre dance history course. There is

also little written about the history and progression of musical theatre dance from a theoretical standpoint. While great insight is provided in musical theatre history texts, the focus is split between singing, acting, and dancing, in that order of importance. “As dances are evanescent in the theatre, so, sadly, are choreographers” (Grody and Lister viii).

*Back Stage* listed Baldwin Wallace University as one of its top ten musical theatre programs in the country. Their program includes “classical acting techniques like Stanislavsky, Meisner, and Alexander, as well as focusing on diction and dialects, heightened verse, acting for the camera, and contemporary scene study” (Field 24). While a musical theatre dancer needs to hone their acting abilities, these in-depth, specific courses will keep dancers from courses in which they can refine their dance technique in the studio.

The same article lists Ithaca College as another highly rated musical theatre program. Ithaca College lists its dance offerings as “jazz, ballet, and modern dance” (Field 28). Aside from the obvious omission of tap dance, the lack of inclusion of other necessary genres present on the Broadway stage, such as hip hop, ballroom, and Broadway styles, this program seemed to provide insufficient dance offerings.

Other schools highlighted in this article did not list specific dance course offerings or performance opportunities. With the triple focus of the major, it was unclear which dance courses were offered. This means the variety and inequity among musical theatre programs can be daunting for an aspiring musical theatre dancer.

Thus, there was not a clear choice when selecting a program to refine performing skills for a career in musical theatre dance. When seeking higher education, many

variables paralyze young dancers during the process of deciding on their educational path. Dancers who wish to seek a career in musical theatre choreography are even more limited in their opportunities. Currently no degree program exists for musical theatre choreography. Future musical theatre choreographers often must seek performance degrees or interdisciplinary degrees to receive the training and knowledge they desire.

### **Significance of Study**

Musical theatre dance is continuing to evolve along with changes in musical theatre, and little content addressing these changes is being documented or taught in undergraduate education. “For one job you might find yourself busting a move in the latest ‘street dance’ style; for the next, you may spend eight months rediscovering the Charleston or the Black Bottom for a period show like *Thoroughly Modern Millie*” (Belingy and Byrne 16). Given the need to be trained in a wide variety of styles and genres to be successful in musical theatre dance, this research might provide insight for the growing need to expand course offerings within undergraduate musical theatre and dance major programs to provide training and experiences for aspiring musical theatre dance professionals. This study was conducted to identify if there is a need for higher level, specialized courses to further refine and solidify the necessary dance technique and skills.

Each time a musical is mounted there is one artistic element that is almost invariably original—the choreography. While dialogue, musical notes, and even a set design can be recreated, the dances cannot. This has contributed to the lack of written material surrounding the subject of dance in musical theatre. (Phillips 116)

Resources that include documentation of musical theatre dance are either lacking or inaccessible. “People involved in theatre dance are very hassled with their next job, their next show, their next project. They are surviving in a sense, even if they are

enormously successful. They're not looking back, they're sloppy about keeping records.” (Grody and Lister 72). Many choreographers have documented their works in their own shorthand or have their assistants create “show bibles.” Broadway dancer turned choreographer Christopher Chadman, best known for originating the role of Greg in *A Chorus Line*, always documented his productions, but he stated that “It [his note-taking] really only means something to me and my assistants” (Grody and Lister 192). *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Crazy for You*, and *The Producers* are some of the shows that come with the original choreography manual along with the script and score when rights to the production are purchased. These are not published documents that individuals outside of producing theatrical agencies can access. Even if a musical theatre dancer gained access to these materials, they might not be able to decipher the author’s short hand.

Little in modern theatre has been documented more profusely than the Broadway musical in its heyday. But for all the recordings, books, and photographs that have paid tribute to the most indigenous and best loved of American theatrical forms, a key player in its fabled history has been neglected: the choreographer. (Grody and Lister vii)

“It is a fact that most theatre dances created from the 1920s to the early ‘60s (before the advent of videotape) have been lost because little or no records were made when they were first created” (Grody and Lister 65). However, with the creation of the American Dance Machine, Lee Theodora attempted to document and preserve dances from this prolific time in musical theatre. This New York-based organization and school was dedicated to researching, re-creating, and ultimately preserving original choreography of the great Broadway shows of yesteryear. Unfortunately, the company and school disbanded when Theodora died in 1987 (Grody and Lister 65). No similar company, organization or school has emerged in its absence.

Individuals who want a career in musical theatre choreography have limited options. “It seems there is a hole somewhere in between the two worlds of concert dance choreographer and musical theatre choreography” (Kelly 17). Many that find success in musical theatre choreography careers seek their own experiences and training. This path seems not as unlikely as one might think, since several Broadway stars did not pursue or complete formal degrees. This finding begs the question of who will be qualified to teach future prospective Broadway dance performers and choreographers at the collegiate level.

Broadway choreographer Casey Nicholaw, best known for his work on the Tony Award-winning smash hit *Book of Mormon*, said his career had a “traditional path in a sense that you have gone from an ensemble member to Broadway director-choreographer” (Cramer 161). He did not finish his degree plan but rather stated, “My training came from watching everyone at all times” (Cramer 160). This ‘traditional’ path is very common among musical theatre dance professionals. Dance programs and musical theatre programs generally focus on the performer, but do not necessarily prepare artists for upward movement within their profession. Like Nicholaw, dancers have to book a Broadway show to learn from the experience, learn the professional norms, and make connections to be able to actualize a higher-level career in musical theatre dance.

Broadway director-choreographer Sergio Trujillo, best known on Broadway for his work on *Jersey Boys*, *The Addams Family* and *Memphis*, affirmed “there is no school for musical theatre choreography, at least that I know of. There’s nothing like learning by being in the trenches with those you admire and who can really teach you the ropes” (Cramer 230). Citing his professional experiences, Trujillo rose through the ranks from ensemble dancer to director-choreographer; his education was his Broadway career.



Dance programs emphasize improvisation as a source of inspiration for choreography. Musical theatre choreography functions to carry plot, establish mood or atmosphere, embody a theme or idea, replace dialogue, generate comedy, extend a dramatic moment, and overwhelm in spectacle (Kislan 242-244). When asked if he ever approached choreography from an improvisation setting, Jerry Mitchell's response was, "I knew what their story was, where they had to start and finish, and I knew where the number had to take them. When you're doing a musical, it always depends on the story, always" (Cramer 148). Trujillo looks for inspiration within the material, "I'm servicing the material. I challenge myself and push myself to create a language that is specific to a particular show" (Cramer 231).

Stroman is a choreographer whose career has crossed genre lines from musical theatre to contemporary dance and ballet.

I always have the character in mind when I'm choreographing. When you are working in the theatre you must speak to actors, dancers, and singers from the standpoint of their character. It is somewhat different in classical ballet and abstract dance forms, but theatrically your character informs how and why you move. (Cramer 210)

Stroman has choreographed Tony Award-winning musicals and "dansicals" (*Crazy for You*, *Show Boat*, and *Contact*) as well as for the New York City Ballet, television, and film (*The Producers*). Her versatility and expertise in a wide variety of dance forms has made her an unstoppable success.

Anthony Van Laast, whose choreographic career extends past Broadway to London's West End, agreed that choreography for musical theatre varies greatly from concert dance.

The art of musical theatre is collaboration, unlike choreographing a ballet or contemporary piece. It's the collaboration with your composer and then with your

musical arranger to make sure that the music is as you want it. It's the collaboration with your designers to make sure the costumes are as you want them and how the designer sees them. (Cramer 246)

While Van Laast's comment spoke to the collaboration with the music arranger and the designers, the choreographer is not alone in the decision-making aspects of the production process. They are one element of a design team that must share the same artistic vision in order to deliver entertainment as an integrated whole.

Dancers who wish to choreograph for musical theatre need different skills than those currently being taught or addressed in undergraduate ballet and contemporary based choreography courses. Collaboration, storytelling, and production knowledge are vital skills. "At one time, choreography meant just supplying steps. Today it has become all-encompassing. It has expanded to include the total concept, the seamless flow of an entire production" (Grody and Lister ix).

Given that there is not a degree plan for musical theatre choreography, "A training program, in the form of either a university program or a well-written text book, could greatly enhance the skills and knowledge of aspiring choreographers" (Kelly 2).

The need for qualified individuals who can teach these potential courses is imperative. "There is no substitute for proper dance training with a good teacher to give you the foundation for building a successful career" (Belingy and Byrne 18). With most working professionals not completing degrees and no higher degree opportunities for those who are interested, the collegiate world of musical theatre dance is not growing and at a standstill. "The best practitioners don't necessarily make the best teachers" (Belingy and Byrne 19). Those who are experts in the field of musical theatre dance have not necessarily been provided the needed pedagogical training or education courses. Those

who wish to become qualified to teach musical theatre dance at a collegiate level currently have no specific avenues to explore. In this study, the researcher hoped to pave the way for higher degree opportunities, which in turn would provide more research on musical theatre dance. Since currently no such opportunities exist, very little formally written material can be found beyond historical accounts, production reviews, and interviews.

Those participating in this study also had the opportunity to reflect on their training and professional experiences to analyze their career readiness for the musical theatre dance professions. By reviewing their responses, advocacy for expanded and specific course offerings at the undergraduate level could provide more comprehensive training for future musical theatre dance professionals.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many jobs within the scope of professional musical theatre dance: performer, dance captain, assistant/associate choreographer, choreographer at both the regional and Broadway levels, and director-choreographer. Tony Award-winning Broadway choreographer Christopher Gattelli described the normal path for a career in musical theatre dance: “I think it’s every performer’s plan if they want to be a choreographer or director. They assume they’ll pay their dues and climb the ladder in a traditional way” (Cramer 100). While many dancers do not seek opportunities beyond the performer level, those who wish to seek choreography fame on Broadway often start as performers and must dance their way to the other side of the production table. This chapter will trace the traditional path of musical theatre dance careers to identify the skills, training, and experiences necessary to gain employment at each level.

**Musical Theatre Dancer: “Just strut your stuff and they can’t ignore us.”**

To get a job as a dancer on Broadway, a high level of technical dance ability is required. Gattelli stated, “At this point, everyone should be able to do a double pirouette” (Cramer 101). In Amy Nathan’s book *Meet the Dancers*, the three Broadway dancers she interviewed credited their strong technical ballet training for their proficiency. John Seyla, Elizabeth Parkinson and Jamal Story all studied ballet in their youth and continued to study while performing (Nathan). In an interview with Lauren Kay, Broadway dancer

Lauryn Ciardullo talked about the value of technique during her audition for the national tour of *A Chorus Line*, staged by original cast member Baayork Lee. “In every callback, Baayork kept saying to go back to ballet class. I wasn’t missing turns, but my technique wasn’t solid” (Kay “God I Hope I Get It” 73). Applying that advice helped Ciardullo book the job.

In addition to the high technical expectations, choreographers are looking for more from today’s dancers. Broadway director-choreographer Randy Skinner, who was Gower Champion’s dance assistant on *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* and has received multiple nominations and awards for his choreography, shared his difficulty when casting an ensemble for shows:

Today you have great jazz dancers, great ballet dancers, and great hoofers. You do have some people who have blended it all together and do all three pretty well. But, when you do a show where maybe the tap level is pushed a little higher technically, and the stakes are higher, then you sometimes lose a dancer or two, because they haven’t really dedicated themselves to tap. Then, of course, if you have a show that has a great tap number plus a great jazz number, you sometimes lose your hoofers at the auditions. They wipe the floor clean with the tapping, but then you ask them to do something with great style in jazz or a combo that involves many turns or pirouettes and they don’t always have that capability. (Cramer 185)

Well-rounded dancers are a necessity in professional musical theatre.

Blankenbuehler believed,

You have to take tap class so you have rhythm, and parlay that into hip-hop class, so you have some funk about you. Even if you’re going to be a contemporary dancer, everybody’s got to do a little bit of everything. It’s the well-rounded person who is worth watching. (Cramer 47-48)

To be cast as a dancer in a musical no longer means simply having great dance technique. Ensemble dancers are being asked to do more while still being expected to execute advanced dance skills.

An understanding of style is another important attribute that musical theatre dancers should possess. Award winning Broadway director-choreographer Kathleen Marshall, best known for her work on *Kiss Me, Kate*, the 2007 revival of *Grease*, and the 2011 revival of *Anything Goes*, discussed what she looks for in auditions:

Of course, I want strong technique; that goes without saying. But I think many dancers that have strong technique don't concentrate on anything else. You want people who are alive, bright eyed, focused, and energized. I think dancers must be able to adapt to style very fast. I think many times there are dancers who can kick their leg quite high, they can execute triple turns, and leap and jump, but they can't absorb that style you're looking for. And I think that's a very unique talent." (Cramer 130)

Skinner agreed with Marshall's assessment of the importance of style in Broadway dancers. "What you hope to find in the ideal world is the technical dancer that you need. And then style is equally important, if not more" (Cramer 189).

Acting is another skill which has risen to a higher level of importance than ever before. When asked if he could see the "acting in the dancing," Rob Ashford said, "... it's crucial. There are some amazing dancers that are technically incredible, but because there's nothing 'there,' we can't use them" (Cramer 15). Jerry Mitchell agreed and noted, "My favorite dancer is an actor. You can turn until you're blue in the face, but if you can't tell me why you're turning the way you are, or what you're expressing and what you're feeling when you're doing it, I'm not going to be interested for very long" (Cramer 148).

In the early days of Broadway musicals, there were separate dancing and singing choruses. Over the years, those two separate choruses have merged into one and dancers in the ensemble are also required to sing. Carlyle stressed that the shrinking size of the

cast means that dancers have to be able to sing and act to earn a spot in the company (Cramer 82).

It was a long journey for the dancers. At first they only had to be great-looking. Later they had to tap. Then they had to dance, then be proficient in that most technical of all disciplines, ballet. Then they had to act, and then they had to sing. (Flinn 288).

A career as a Broadway dancer is coveted and desired by many but is not always as glamorous. Daniel Nagrin, a pioneer modern dancer who also performed on Broadway, remembered “Performing on the Broadway stage was a mixed experience. The challenge was enormous. The pressure was unrelenting” (Nagrin 13). He also said:

“The worst times on Broadway were the painful times of casting the shows, when hundreds of dancers would file into the cold theatres to audition for a dozen spots or less. It hurt to say the fateful words, “Thank you!” My best memories are of the rehearsals, making the dances. (Nagrin 13)

Dancer John Seyla, who performed in *Times They are A-Changin’* and *Movin’ Out*, talked about the physical demands of performing a Broadway show eight times a week. “Dancing the same thing every night can be tiring. You’re using only certain muscles every night, so you need to take class to awaken those other muscles you don’t use in the show” (Nathan 62).

To be a dancer on Broadway today encompasses a wider range of skills than ever before: singing, reading music, acting, and often embodying multiple characters in the same show. Broadway performer Tanya Bird believed that “auditioning is really the job. Getting the show and getting to perform is the reward” (Gold “Girl Most Likely” 94).

Many dancers experience success in regional theatre or tours for many years before kicking up their heels on ‘The Great White Way.’ Kathleen Marshall reinforced the time it may take to book a Broadway show. “This business is all about establishing

relationships. It's all an opportunity. And you don't know when they're going to come. But when they do come, you have to step up to the plate" (Cramer 123). Building relationships and finding opportunities is not a guarantee and may take dancers years to accomplish. Success on Broadway is also fleeting. Seyla warned "A show could close after a week and you have to look for the next job" (Nathan 62).

### **Dance Captain: "Shall we dance?"**

Once the show is open and running, the responsibility to maintain the choreographer's choreography falls to the production's dance captain. "The Dance Captain is a member of the company who maintains the artistic standard of all choreography and/or musical staging in a production" (*Guidelines for Dance Captains*).

The position of dance captain is not only crucial to the overall success of a musical; it also affords a performer the unique opportunity to work with, and learn from a choreographer during rehearsals, as well as work with, and learn from the stage manager during the run of the production. The experience of being a dance captain is an excellent training ground for aspiring choreographers. (Gorrie 1)

Dance captains are members of the production's ensemble cast. In addition to performing their track, they hold the responsibility to maintain choreography, rehearse adjustments, and restage numbers if a cast member is out of the show due to illness or injury. Regularly, dance captains give notes to maintain the standard of the production. "This includes the dance steps, formations, style, intent, technique and energy level of the musical numbers" (Gorrie 6).

Often, the lessons learned from being a dance captain are helpful in easing the transition from dancer to choreographer. Ashford expounded on the job and experience of being a dance captain. He explained "the dance captain must see every detail. I think that was a big part of my training in becoming a choreographer" (Cramer 6). Many valuable



lessons are learned from being a dance captain such as, “professional attitude, dedication, diplomacy, organization and various administrative duties required in professional theatrical productions” (Gorrie 1). Gattelli commented on the qualities he found most beneficial:

So, if I am looking for a dance captain, assistant, or an associate, in terms of acting, I’m looking for someone smart. Let’s face it, eventually that person is going to be taking over an entire room and leading the dancers. They have to be able to talk to them and communicate my acting intent for that number.” (Cramer 101)

Many dance captains are also swings. A swing is “an actor who is part of the company, but does not perform if all cast members are able to do so. He or she prepares a number of roles and must be ready to perform on call” (Gorrie 2). This gives a swing an excellent opportunity to be intimately familiar with all the choreography in the show and better able to keep the big picture in mind when noting or adjusting choreography throughout the run.

Dance captains also share the responsibility of documenting the show with the assistant or associate choreographer (if any are on the project). Due to copyright laws and union policy, video recordings do not exist for many productions. Therefore “hand drawn charts must be created to notate the blocking of scenes and staging of musical numbers, which ultimately becomes a part of the Show Bible” (Gorrie 7). Kathleen Kelly found in researching the methodology of choreography for musical theatre that Labanotation is rarely used to document a production’s dance numbers (30). Thus, dance captains must be expert dancers, teachers, communicators, and possess the ability to document the production in ways not generally taught when learning classical dance forms.

**Assistant/Associate Choreographer:**  
**“One smile and suddenly nobody  
 else will do.”**

Assistant and associate choreographers are an essential part of a Broadway show. Broadway dancer turned choreographer Thommie Walsh stated “It’s crazy that people don’t realize how important they are” (Grody and Lister 183). In pre-production, they often work with the choreographer for weeks on the creation of material and solidifying steps to be taught. During the rehearsal process, they are integral to the teaching process and often run rehearsals on their own. Director-choreographer Carlyle, former associate choreographer for Susan Stroman, relied on his associates throughout the rehearsal process:

If I’m wearing both hats, and I’m in a room directing a scene, my associate choreographer will be teaching dance next door. I want that voice to my energy, creativity, and my positivity. It has to be my agenda, my vision, and my way of doing it. I demand a lot, and many times rely on an assistant to really see a movement.” (Cramer 80)

Skinner described his expectations for those he chooses to be his assistants and associates:

My assistants must know the terminology correctly in all the art forms. They must be able to say the right word for the right step if somebody asks. They must know how to count properly. They have to be able to break down a piece of music, and know how to impart it to counts. And they must be good teachers. (Cramer 185)

Assistants and associates are often brought in during pre-production and take an active role in the research and creation of the material. Graciela Daniele, a Tony Award-winning choreographer who worked with many famed Broadway choreographers prior to her individual choreographic success, remembered her time as an assistant. She noted:

When I assisted Michael Bennett in *Follies*, we started six months before the actual rehearsals, doing constant research. We watched movies and then improvised, dancing around like idiots. Same thing with Fosse, he taught me

some tricks about choreography through research and looking at pictures and imagining things. (Grody and Lister 159)

Rob Ashford learned how to be a choreographer by being a dance captain and assisting Kathleen Marshall and other choreographers. He was asked to stage *Kiss of the Spider Woman* for Rob Marshall. The choreography was already done, so Ashford “got to exercise the part of my creative self that I hadn’t really exercised before—communication skills” (Cramer 7) without the worry of creating the movement or if the movement would be good.

Before having assistants like Ashford, Kathleen Marshall was an assistant choreographer herself. She spoke of the invaluable nature of her experiences:

I got to see how they run a rehearsal, how they talk to actors, to writers, to designers, and to the music department. What notes do they give? What do they say in a production meeting after a preview? How do they run that production meeting, or a technical rehearsal? Those are things that unless you witness them, it’s very hard to do. (Cramer 129)

Stroman had additional expectations of her assistant and associate choreographers. “I want my assistants to be people who can collaborate and also have the right personality to deal with anything that could go wrong. They must also be diplomats and deal with the eccentricities of actors and designers” (Cramer 213).

Not every Broadway choreographer looked for the same qualities in their assistants. Tony Award-winning director-choreographer Tommy Tune said “I find people who are at that stage in life who would like to choreograph. I have this wonderful fellow, Jeff Calhoun, he’s becoming a director right before my eyes” (Grody and Lister 143). Daniele liked to choose individuals who “do not necessarily move the same way I do, in my style” (Grody and Lister 159). Director-choreographer Michael Bennett and his collaborative partner Bob Avian said “we don’t use the same assistant on every show”

(Grody and Lister 111). Instead, they chose individuals with strengths that filled gaps in their skill set.

While the assistant or associate choreographer route helped many famed Broadway choreographers cut their teeth, this is not a necessary step. Blankenbuehler opted for a different path to Broadway acclaim.

Many of my friends, like Rob Ashford and Kathleen Marshall, were assisting other people, so I wondered if that's the direction I should go. But, I didn't want to stop dancing. I felt like it was a full-time career to assist somebody. So, I made the very firm decision that I was going to continue dancing full time and choreograph on my own. That meant I had many lessons to learn that my friends did not, because they were assistants. (Cramer 30-31)

While being an assistant/associate choreographer is not an essential step in climbing the musical theatre dance ladder, it does provide the opportunity to assist in pre-production, giving one an insight into technical rehearsals and production meetings, and the responsibilities of the choreographer throughout the rehearsal process. Graciela Daniele credited her experiences in assisting to her choreographic success "I think it's the only way unless you're a genius who comes in with new ideas. The way to learn the craft is to assist. Once I started to assist, I discovered the other side of it, the creative side, which dancers have but only up to a certain point" (Grody and Lister 164). This step in the hierarchy also provides the opportunity to hone teaching skills. In addition to expert-level technique and performing skills, assistant and associate choreographers benefit from learning pedagogical and teaching knowledge.

The opportunity to hold one of these coveted positions often comes to those who have worked with a choreographer as a dancer and proven their ability. Many assistant/associate choreographers are individuals the choreographer has worked with before and who have experienced the rehearsal process with them. Rob Marshall liked to

use the same people because “there are people you like; you have a short hand with them” (Cramer 13). A dancer does not simply apply or submit a headshot/resume for these desired roles in the production process. Many years of hard work performing and proving their abilities help them arrive at this level.

**Regional Choreographers: “And if that’s not enough then go and shuffle off to Buffalo!”**

Tune remembered “there used to be twenty Broadway shows a year, now we have two or three. There are regional theatres” (Grody and Lister 153). “Working up to a shot at choreographing a Broadway show can take decades. Many choreographers find the regional circuit a valuable stage where opportunities come easier and yield a wealth of experience” (Kay “Don’t Cry For Me, I’m in *Evita*” 66). Stroman believed that “young directors and choreographers have to make their own work; and trying to make your own work without financial support is quite difficult” (Cramer 220). While many look for opportunities and showcases within New York City, others seek opportunities to create work in regional theatres throughout the country.

When doing regional work, it is very important to be able to read music. Rob Ashford stated, “you get their score and dance arrangements, and you have to edit them down, so you need to be able to tell the difference between the verse, the chorus, the bridge, and where the melody sits. In other words, it’s helpful to have a basic knowledge of music and structure” (Cramer 16). Many dance breaks and incidental music are not included in the cast recordings and often are the responsibility of the choreographer to re-create or stage. While Blankenbuehler did not think that the ability to read music is necessary to choreograph on Broadway today due to the wide use of music technology,

he did believe that “if I was doing *Bells are Ringing* in summer stock, sure I’d need it” (Cramer 40).

Carlyle, who also reads music, commented that, “It’s so helpful for me and for them if I can speak their language. . . . It’s not any different when you’re working with the lighting designer. . . . I need to know the terms because it shows respect to other artists” (Cramer 80-81). The collaborative nature of musical theatre means the production team must work together to present a cohesive project.

Choreographers are vital members of the production team. A “choreographer will be well prepared and will have discussed with the director in detail what the choreographic style of the show should be” (White 74). Often choreographers are required to adjust their vision to suit the requests of the director or other technical departments. This negotiation helps the production make its way to the stage as a cohesive art form.

“Good stage choreography has a storytelling function similar to text and music” (Church 174). Choreographing a whole show also means using a variety of movement to fit with a variety of songs. “Choreography in the service of a musical book relies on dances whose character, plan structure, and development identify them as opening number, solo, duet, male or female ensemble, production number, ballet sequence, and crossover” (Kislan 245). Many choreographers are primed to create the production numbers, but there are a variety of additional dances within the context of an entire production. “There are danced transitions, danced entrances and exits, and source dance, that is, dance within the context of the story” (Church 175).

Musical staging is a slightly ambiguous term which can cover anything from the simple blocking of a solo song, to the organization of a huge ensemble number

involving the whole cast. There are no hard and fast rules dictating who will take the responsibility for the musical staging; in some cases it will be the choreographer and in others it will be the director, and often it will be a collaborative process involving the two of them. (White 79)

Gattelli stated that “much of what I’ve done to this point and what has made my career a success has been musical staging” (Cramer 98). The ability to move people around the stage to align with the dramatic arc of the show without over-choreographing movement is a unique challenge for choreographers who like to make every piece of music in a show a production number.

When creating choreography for musical theatre, the many and varied elements of the entire libretto must be taken into account if the dances are going to best serve the production as a whole (Nagrin 146). “Choreography should play an integral role in carrying the plot, setting the mood, developing the characters, or communicating ideas and this must be done in a creative way that takes into account the technical abilities of the actors, singers, and dancers in the cast” (Phillips 115). Communicating with actors can be different than communicating with dancers. Having a different vocabulary and a different set of prior experiences can cause a communication gap. When discussing working with actors on musical numbers, Kathleen Marshall found:

When you’re staging an actor’s musical number, you have to approach it very differently, almost gently. Even if you have a plan in your head as to how you think the number is going to layout, you need to involve them, listen to their input, and move slowly. (Cramer 123)

While many numbers feature a chorus of dancers, the choreographer has to create solo and duet numbers for principal characters of varying ability levels. Many choreographers struggle to create effective dance movement/staging for non-dancers in principal roles. Broadway dancer turned choreographer Dan Siretta recounted, “I want to

make them look good and make myself look good in the process. So many times I've seen people trying to choreograph over someone's head. You can't do that" (Grody and Lister 171). Many of these individuals are trained actors or singers so communication and use of dance specific vocabulary can be learning curve. Chadman found "Imagery seems to be very important to actresses and actors because they understand, that's how they work as actors" (Grody and Lister 195).

Van Laast approached working with singers in a similar manner. "I have to understand the music and how they phrase their singing; because I have to make sure that all the moves I do work with the breath and the rhythm as they're singing. That's a huge part of the craft of choreography and staging for musicals" (Cramer 250).

In addition to reading a published and established score, "sometimes the choreography, too, is notated or otherwise documented, and in some shows using the original choreography is mandatory" (Church 175). The choreographer must either have prior experience with the production, possess the ability to read the documentation, or research the material to appropriately stage the production.

Since the integration of dance in musical theatre, the importance of storytelling within choreography continues to hold a high value. "Musical numbers have to come from a scene and go back into a scene" (Nagrin 145). Dance sequences do not stand in isolation but are a continuation of the narrative thread. Carlyle remarked "I believe there is a misconception that choreographers simply make up steps. That's such a misrepresentation of a choreographer's job" (Cramer 74). Musical theatre choreographers also manage a large number of set pieces, props, period costumes, and other technical



elements that can affect choreography. Gattelli shared his approach to choreography in musical theatre:

Now what story are we telling through this number? How do we start? What do we need to learn? How do the characters need to turn? What changes them by the end of this number? How can we accomplish this without singing it, or how can we take some of that dialogue and put it in the middle? . . . Wow, this is what it's really about. It's storytelling." (Cramer 98)

In Kelly's research, she discovered that choreographers "should take one or two acting classes as well. These classes should focus on teaching them how to tell a story through movement" (45). She also found the importance of knowing "the fundamentals of teaching. Learning how to make modifications or accommodations for performers" (46). Often at the regional level, choreographers do not participate in the audition process and must create movement for the cast they are provided.

Siretta remembered his time working in regional theatre, "In regional theatre, they expect you to come in knowing what you're going to do" (Grody and Lister 172). While the twentieth century has allowed for virtual and digital production meetings, all composition and pre-production occurs at the choreographer's expense. Bennett always did pre-production for every show and would come in completely prepared. "Even when I was choreographing for stock shows, I would rent a rehearsal space for three hours a day, at my own expense. I would get one of my friends to dance around with me. I would do six weeks of pre-production" (Grody and Lister 101).

In addition to the creative process, choreographers need to refine their teaching skills. Bennett recounted the importance of a positive working environment and the ability to lead a cast.

The key to working with performers is being able to handle people. That's almost more important than the ability to choreograph. The ability to get the best out of

people, to inspire people, to work with them, and create an atmosphere that is not a snake pit. To create trust on both sides. You don't always do it but you sure as hell try. The best work comes out of a room full of trust and love. (Grody and Lister 117)

**Broadway Choreographer: “Take me back to Manhattan.”**

Sylviane Gold interviewed Broadway directors and producers about what they look for when finding a choreographer for a new musical. Although all had various preferences and different experiences, a glaring misconception was made clear, “dance steps are not high on the list of things they care about. They care about storytelling, personality, and teamwork” (Gold “The Right Step” 216).

*Important Skills for Success*

One does not simply arrive at the coveted position of Broadway choreographer without quality experiences under their belt. Kathleen Marshall talked about her progression to the top as the traditional path to a career as a Broadway choreographer. She said, “I think every choreographer I know has made a similar progression. He or she was a dancer and was probably a dance captain or an assistant or associate choreographer before they started to choreograph on their own” (Cramer 116). The opportunity to learn under other professionals and participate in the process prior to taking the reins is an invaluable experience.

In addition to the skills required of a choreographer at a regional theatre level, a Broadway choreographer has challenges unique to a new show. When working on a brand-new show, the process of arriving at a solidified script and score is different than producing a revival with published materials. During pre-production for a new show,

The director, choreographer, music director, and dance arranger discuss the dance needs of a production and the music that accompanies it, or review existing

music. A choreographer might already have devised choreography, the choreographer and a few dancers or an assistant choreographer might get together with the music director and possibly some instrumentalists in a studio to try out ideas. (Church 176)

Choreographers are part of the process of solidifying the final show which includes the book, music, and dance numbers. They are an integral part of the creative team and vital to its successful collaboration.

When a choreographer begins working on a new show, they must collaborate with a dance arranger to develop the music for dance breaks within musical numbers. The dance arranger is the “liaison between the music department and the dance department” (Pincus-Roth). The dance arranger marries the structure of the music composition with the movement desires of the choreographer (Pincus-Roth). Choreographers often “use ‘dummy’ music as they develop a dance and some will presume that the eventual dance arrangement will have the exact structure and feel of their mock up” (Church 176). Again, on the importance of being able to read music, Gattelli averred, “It helps me because I can more easily speak to a dance arranger, orchestrator, or composer. When you have the same vocabulary, communication is so much easier, and it expedites the process” (Cramer 105). These skills are so important that some Broadway choreographers have honed them to expert levels. In fact, on certain projects, Skinner has even acted as his own dance arranger (Cramer 189).

Musical theatre is a collaborative art form. Tony Award-nominated choreographer Larry Fuller described the process of bringing a new show to Broadway: “Before doing a new show there are months of talk and preproduction meetings. Say it takes about a year to get a new show pulled together and sometimes a lot longer” (Grody and Lister 135).

Collaborating is a large part of the early production process before casting and creation. Gattelli declared, “I don’t care where a great idea comes from. It’s about putting up the best show you can” (Cramer 106). Choreographer Jeff Calhoun agreed that collaboration is important and begins the process by noting the “best idea wins. I don’t care whether it’s the accompanist or the custodian emptying the garbage with a good idea. I want, include, and hope I cast people that I know will bring something to the table” (Cramer 67). Stroman stated “Collaboration of all the departments is the real joy of the process. When something is not working, another department might be able to save the moment” (Nagrin 144-145).

The ability to read and understand designs and ground plans as well as participate in the conceptual conversations are essential skills for a choreographer. Bennett spoke of the advanced theatrical technology in a Broadway production and how it influenced his choreography.

If you are going to use treadmills, or use revolves, a lot of decisions go into it before you begin to do the choreography. In the show *Coco*, for instance, once we knew it was going to involve using revolves, then it was about the speed of the revolutions. What were we going to see up front in each number, and at what point were we going to use that effect in the show. (Grody and Lister 97)

### *The Value of Doing Research*

Research is an essential element for many successful choreographers. Broadway choreographer Ernest O. Flatt said “I look up research on how people stood and how they dressed. Because how they dressed dictated a great deal about how they moved” (Grody and Lister 34-35). Donald Saddler, an original member of American Ballet Theatre before having a successful musical theatre career, also believed that research was a key component to his creative process. He commented:

If it's a period piece, for instance, I would read everything I could about that period. Say it's 1910 and it's in the Midwest, I would try to get as much indigenous material about that period, about what people were, what they ate, what their entertainment was. The times, how they conducted themselves, what their morals were, if they were very religious or secular in feeling, or maybe it was just wild and woolly. Whatever the play and the plot are going to do, I do as much research on that as I can. What kind of music was played, either in the parlor or the local dance hall? Who the performers of the period were who toured through, who might have left their mark on the people of that particular moment in history. All these things give you a style, which I will then work in. (Grody and Lister 14)

Choreographers often research the time period, location, historical events, and attire to ensure their movement choices are appropriate and authentic. The choreographic design must work cohesively with other production components and enhance the concept of the overall production.

#### *Other Skills to Consider*

“Dance for dance’s sake is very seldom effective in a narrative musical, and the director and choreographer should try where possible to find a reason for the existence of these danced sections” (White 75). Leadership and communication with the cast are only one side of the production process the choreographer must manage. Supporting the director’s vision, and communicating well with the artistic team are important aspects of collaboration. Mitchell affirmed “We’re all individuals—the writers, the director, the choreographer—but we must present one clear idea.” (Cramer 152). Stroman believed one of the most important characteristics of a choreographer is knowledge and experience of other areas of the production process.

Any bit of knowledge is helpful. And I think that as I go along, the more I know about every single department, the better my work. I could do the greatest dance step, but if the lighting is not right, it won’t matter. The more you know about lighting, the more you know about the set, the more you know about costumes, same thing. You could do the greatest dance step, but if the costume is not right, it too won’t matter. (Cramer 213)

While the majority of today's cutting-edge Broadway choreographers have worked their way up from performing in the chorus to a seat at the production table, technical prowess is not as important for a choreographer as it is for a dancer. Fosse "created an extraordinary style and some wonderful works from his lack of ballet training. Balanchine wasn't a great dancer either and that's why they got into choreography" (Grody and Lister 186). That progression isn't prevalent today. "Michael Bennett wasn't a technical dancer, yet his instincts were so right" (Grody and Lister 186).

Walsh described how the changes in the production process affected his creative process. "Today, we don't have out-of-town tryouts, there's not much time to put shows together" (Grody and Lister 180). While most the choreographers interviewed in Grody and Lister's book found that a limited timeline encouraged quick thinking and resulted in less opportunity to overthink and redo choreography, the timeline was a big factor in managing the choreography.

### **Director-Choreographer: "You can't stop the beat!"**

Many Broadway choreographers have found themselves wearing two hats on the production team: choreographer and director. As Kathleen Marshall shared, this progression to the top of the production team has been held by many great choreographers. In an interview, she commented:

Most director-choreographers begin as dancers then move up to dance captain or associate choreographer, to choreographer, and finally director-choreographer: Bob Fosse, Michael Bennett, Gower Champion, Tommy Tune, and Susan Stroman to name a few. (Eichenbaum 32)

Trujillo said "directing is a natural extension of choreography. It's not a huge stretch if you've worked closely, as I have, with directors in true collaborations. It's a common

progression” (Cramer 238). Chadman affirmed “If you’re any good at all you’re thinking of all the things a director would think of but with movement. You’re telling a story, you’re developing characters, you’re expressing emotion” (Grody and Lister 193). Tune agreed and commented on his process by saying “when we discuss choreography, I think of myself as more of a director who dances than a choreographer” (Grody and Lister 143). He continued “I’m more attuned to the whole thing, which is the director’s eye, more than the choreographer’s eye. It seems like a natural progression to move from dancer to choreographer, to director” (Grody and Lister 143).

Some director-choreographers may have started with a ‘dansical.’ Stroman began with *Contact* and Tharp with *Movin’ Out*. “The dansical offers a legitimate canonical position for a ‘choreographer’s musical’ on Broadway. In the dansical, the choreography most often dictates the aesthetic, and conceptual term within a choreographer/director model” (Stiehl 2).

For many, the transition from choreographer to director simply meant widening their view of the production in a small way. Choreographers are already telling the story and creating movement within the vision and design of the show. Mitchell felt “the role of director-choreographer is easier because your story is clear” (Cramer 153). Without another opinion to entertain, the final word regarding the production aesthetic comes from a single mind and voice. Chadman pointed out how aspects of the choreographic scope enhanced his skills to ease the transition to director. “I like staging because it truly tests me as a director” (Grody and Lister 197).

Rob Marshall thought that “the line between a director and a choreographer should be blurred. They should overlap” (Cramer 19). The cohesive nature of the process

made his transition into the director's chair an easy one. He had already been allowed to have input in addition to creating the dance numbers.

Carlyle has often been in both positions. He has served as a choreographer under other directors, directed other choreographers, and led production teams as a director-choreographer. He compared the processes of directing and choreographing when he stated:

Choreographing is often harder because you're handed a blank piece of paper, which is the music, and the director says, 'Okay, go create a dance.' In my head I say to myself, 'Okay, go create a story.' So, I am constantly making a story. Directing doesn't feel any different than choreographing. Directing, in a way, is easier because the story is in the script. (Cramer 74)

### **Summary**

While a vast number of choreographers (and ultimately some director-choreographers) credited their professional experiences for their success, many of the desired qualities and abilities can be taught in formal education. Currently, the musical theatre dancer must cobble together opportunities to prepare for a career. They should find educational opportunities to teach choreography, take pedagogy training, participate in a wide variety of dance technique styles, learn to read music/scores, and hone dramaturgy skills to research a production.

Kelly Burnette has created a choreographer training program for her middle and high school aged students. She spoke about how "student choreographers need these real-world opportunities to develop their craft" (6). She has students "begin in an apprenticeship as an assistant, dance captain, co-choreographer, and then so on" (6). A similar structure could be designed for an undergraduate level dance program. This would allow hopeful Broadway choreographers the opportunity to deal with "time



constraints, cast limitations, and technical problems, among other issues” (Burnette 6) to strengthen skills and magnify career readiness.

Musical theatre continues to evolve as a genre and education must continue to progress with it. Technique and choreographic processes are alive and well, but future musical theatre dance professionals need education and experiences to match the revolution of contemporary artists of all kinds. From American folk dance in *Oklahoma!* to ballet technique in *An American in Paris* to hip hop in *Hamilton*, dance is a driving force in musical theatre. “If a new generation of theatergoers grows up with this in mind, the evolution is really just beginning” (Frischia 28).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **General Research Perspective**

The purpose of this study was to identify educational experiences beneficial to career readiness in musical theatre dance. The methodology chapter will include the details used to design the research instruments, a description of how the research was conducted, and the process of examining the data at the outcome of the study.

Prior to the beginning of the study, the researcher submitted a narrative to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. This narrative included a description of the purpose, methods, data analysis procedures, data handling procedures, risks/discomforts, and benefits. This narrative was accompanied by consent forms and the research instruments for both groups being surveyed. A copy of the narrative and the IRB approval letter are included in Appendix A. Participant consent forms can be viewed in Appendix B and the research tools are included in Appendix C.

#### *Research Type*

This research study used quantitative and qualitative methodology to answer the research questions motivating the study. Yes or no and multiple-choice questions were analyzed quantitatively, while questions answered by filling in a blank or in sentence form were analyzed qualitatively. The qualitative analysis was completed by identifying themes and ideas in the resulting answers as they related to the four essential questions of

the study. Data was gathered in the form of online surveys distributed through email, social media, and trade publications.

In this study, two surveys were used to question two different groups of dancers: dance degree holders and individuals working in musical theatre dance professions. The surveys included questions designed to elicit information about the subjects' dance education and experiences with a focus on musical theatre.

### *Essential Questions*

The researcher used the two above mentioned surveys to answer the following essential questions:

- Q1     What musical theatre dance content is currently being offered in undergraduate dance education programs?
- Q2     What courses should be included in an undergraduate dance education to improve career readiness for work in musical theatre?
- Q3     What education and experience do professional dancers working in musical theatre dance careers have that enables them to be effective?
- Q4     What curriculum should be included in an undergraduate dance program focused on preparing performers and choreographers for careers in professional musical theatre?

### **Research Instruments**

Both surveys used in this study were divided into four sections: 1) General Information, 2) Technique, 3) Choreography and Composition, and 4) Additional Courses. Participants were only permitted to take one survey depending on how they classified themselves—dance degree holders or individuals working in musical theatre dance.

*Survey of Dance Degree Holders*

The Survey of Dance Degree Holders included a total of fifty-three questions that ranged from multiple-choice (thirty-one), to fill in the blank (thirteen), and short answer (nine). The multiple-choice and fill in the blank questions focused on collegiate course offerings, careers for which participants were qualified, and positions they have held. In the short answer questions, the researcher focused on additional training needed and the effects training already completed had on career readiness. Participants must have completed an undergraduate degree in dance to be eligible for participation in this survey.

Section one of the above survey included general questions which were designed to elicit information from the subjects regarding their level of education and professional experiences in musical theatre. The questions unique to this section in the dance degree holders' survey were designed to evaluate whether there was a need for those with dance degrees to have more experiences and training in musical theatre dance. These short answer questions allowed participants the chance to offer personal opinions and descriptions of their training and background. Section one also helped the researcher determine if there was an interest or need for dance degree holders to have had more experience with musical theatre dance genres in their educational program.

In section two of the same survey, the researcher gathered information about the participants' technical dance education. This section of the dance degree holders' survey was designed to discover which dance courses were offered in their undergraduate dance programs in regard to musical theatre dance genres. The participants were specifically asked which level of tap, jazz, and Broadway dance styles were offered where they studied, and whether they had taken some or all of these course types.

The researcher also wanted to know if higher level courses were not offered whether the individual would have had an interest in such courses. These questions determined if there was an interest or desire for higher level tap, jazz, musical theatre and Broadway styles technique classes within undergraduate dance offerings. In this same section, the researcher also asked if additional technique genres would have been beneficial and if participants had pursued additional training for musical theatre dance.

Section three of the survey was titled Choreography and Composition. This portion of the survey included questions about the participants' course work and experiences related to choreography and composition. Since most undergraduate dance programs require courses in choreography and composition, the researcher designed these questions to help her understand if musical theatre dance choreography was included within these courses and if so, how was it addressed.

Section four of the dance degree holders' survey was designed to determine content that was being taught in the following areas: dance history, pedagogy, acting, production, anatomy and kinesiology, and music appreciation and/or theory. In these questions the researcher sought to gain information about courses which were part of an individual's undergraduate course work as well as which education or experiences the survey participants felt would be or were advantageous for career success.

#### *Survey of Musical Theatre Dance Professionals*

The survey of individuals working in musical theatre dance professions included a total of forty-two questions that ranged from multiple-choice (fifteen), to fill in the blank (eight), and short answer (nineteen). In the multiple-choice questions, the researcher focused on the subjects' collegiate course offerings and careers they held at the time of

the research or in the past. Short answer questions were based on career readiness afforded through their training, personal experiences, and the participants' perceptions of additional educational needs. This survey was open to any individual working in musical theatre dance professions and participation was not contingent on the completion of a degree program.

Section one of the Survey of Musical Theatre Dance Professionals began with the same eight questions as the Survey of Dance Degree Holders. The purpose of these questions was to gather information about the participants' education and experience. However, the first question was structured differently because it was not assumed in the second survey that the participant had a dance degree or any degree at all.

The two questions unique to section one of the musical theatre dance professionals' survey were focused on their valuable experiences or training. In these questions, the researcher wanted participants to evaluate and identify the training, background, or experiences which specifically benefited their musical theatre dance careers. Since higher degree options are limited for musical theatre performers, and even more so for musical theatre dance, the researcher included another question in this section to gauge interest in and the direction of potential higher education learning opportunities.

Musical theatre dance encompasses a wide range of genres that must be performed at a mastery level. Section two of the same survey was concerned with dance technique. In this section, the researcher wanted to know which genres were studied in the participant's undergraduate education. This part of the musical theatre dance professionals' survey was similar to a section in the dance degree holders' survey and would hopefully enable the researcher to compare the answers given by the two groups.

Additionally, short answer questions were included in this section to garner opinions about valuable technique classes, additional training pursued outside of the undergraduate program, and education or training participants felt was most beneficial to their musical theatre dance career.

Section three of the musical theatre dance professionals' survey was focused on choreography and composition courses. Here participants answered many of the same questions as those in the dance degree holders' survey. Additionally, three unique questions were included and designed to elicit specific responses about musical theatre choreography and composition. In these questions the researcher wanted to learn which type of choreographic education, training or experiences the participant found most beneficial. The researcher also wanted to know which collegiate courses would have been helpful throughout their career. In the final question in this section, the researcher asked the participants to describe their musical theatre choreographic process so she could compare these responses to those described by the professional choreographers in the Literature Review.

While section four of the musical theatre dance professionals' survey was focused on the same content as that in the dance degree holders' survey, the questions were phrased differently especially with reference to pedagogy because it might not be a component in performance-based degree plans. Thus, in the musical theatre dance professionals' survey, participants were asked how they learned to teach dance movement, whether they felt that pedagogy was important for a choreographer's career, and what education or experiences were beneficial in their career. The researcher anticipated there would be the greatest variety of responses in section four.

## Participants

Individuals who were eligible for participation in this study classified themselves into one of two groups: dance degree holders or individuals working professionally in musical theatre dance. Dance degree holders will have earned at minimum a bachelor's degree in dance including dance performance, dance education, or dance history.

Individuals working in musical theatre dance professions include those who are musical theatre performers, dance captains, assistant/associate choreographers, or choreographers.

Participants were found through the National Dance Education Organization forums, Actors Equity Association, social media, trade publications, and alumna of the University of Northern Colorado. All participants were provided with a description of the study and a link to an online survey. Participation was completely voluntary, and no compensation was given for participation. The individuals could cease participation at any time without repercussions. All those who agreed to take part in the survey were directed to an electronic consent form which they needed to complete prior to beginning the survey.

A total of 174 subjects participated in the study. Of these participants, ninety-two were dance degree holders and eighty-two were musical theatre dance professionals. No demographic information including gender, age, or race was collected.

### *Dance Degree Holders*

The ninety-two participants who completed the dance degree holder survey studied at sixty-three different undergraduate institutions in twenty-six states. The majority, 42%, received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Figure 1 shows the breakdown



of dance degrees earned by dance degree holders. The other category included Bachelor of Performing Arts and a Bachelor of Integrated Studies.

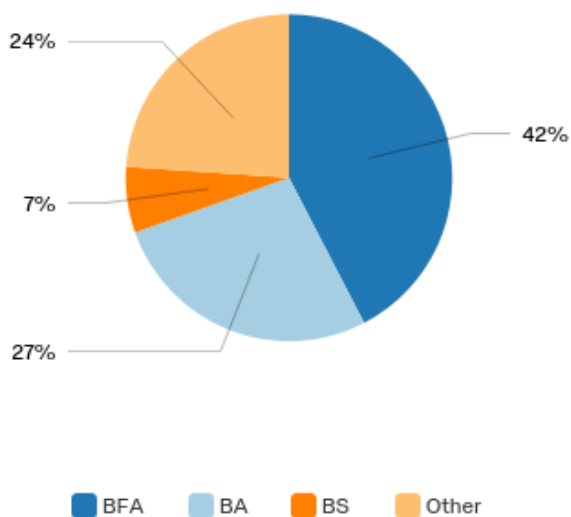


Figure 1. Degree breakdown of Dance Degree Holders

Of the dance degree holders, 68% named Dance as their major and 26% completed a Dance Education course of study. The remaining 5% pursued a major in Dance Pedagogy or a combined Theatre & Dance major and none completed a degree in Dance History.

Figure 2 shows the variety of majors within undergraduate dance degrees the participants received.

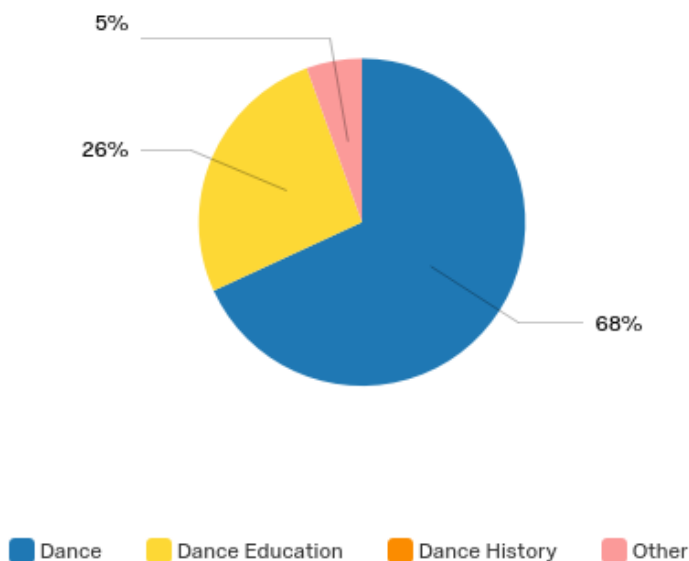


Figure 2. Major breakdown of Dance Degree Holders

Thirty-six participants listed an emphasis with their degree. Emphases included: Contemporary, Modern, Secondary Education, K-12 Education, Movement Analysis, Ballet & Modern, and Jazz & Modern. Twelve participants earned a second bachelor's degree and twenty-eight participants earned a Masters or Doctorate degree.

#### *Musical Theatre Dance Professionals*

While eleven of the Musical Theatre Dance Professionals did not complete a degree, the eighty-two participants studied at forty-five different undergraduate institutions in twenty-two states. The majority, 30%, received a Bachelor's of Fine Arts degree. Figure 3 shows the degrees earned by musical theatre dance professionals.

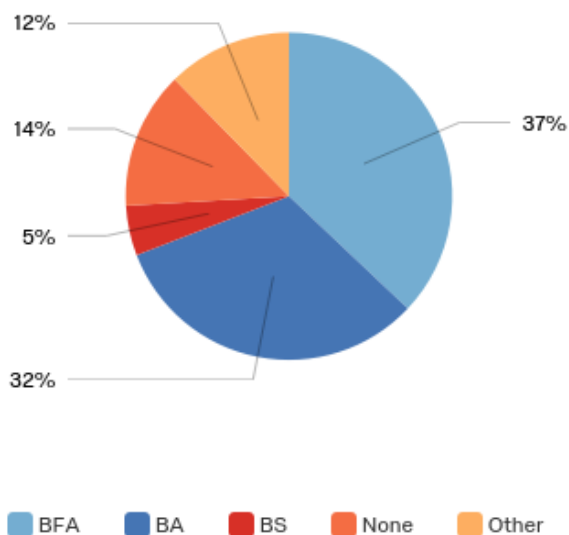


Figure 3. Degree breakdown of Musical Theatre Dance Professionals

The majority, 40%, completed a degree in Musical Theatre, followed by Theatre, and Dance majors. Figure 4 shows the breakdown of majors in which musical theatre dance professionals participated.

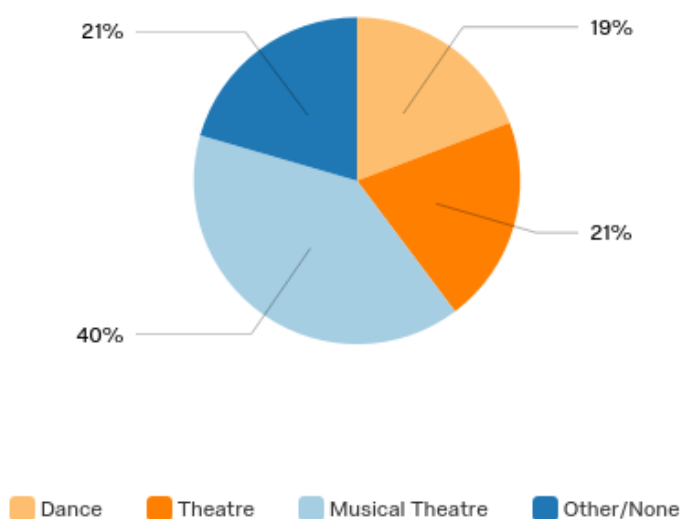


Figure 4. Major breakdown of Musical Theatre Dance Professionals

Additional education listed included certificate programs from unaccredited institutions in various performing arts genres. Only five participants had continued their studies in a master's degree program, none completed nor began a doctoral program.

### **Administration of Surveys**

The surveys were published online on January 6, 2019 and remained open until March 13, 2019. The surveys were posted on National Dance Education Organization forums and various social media outlets. After the initial posting on the researcher's personal social media account, the surveys were shared publically twenty-eight times by others. This included private pages for theatre companies, University alumni pages, and casts of various musical theatre companies across the country.

Participants were directed to an online survey. All survey results were password protected and stored electronically on Qualtrics technology. Qualtrics is a digital survey tool approved and supported by the University of Northern Colorado. The researcher used Qualtrics to electronically distribute and collect the signed consent forms. This technology allowed participants to download the consent form to print or save electronically. Participants were also permitted to stop the survey at any time, save the results, and complete the survey in the future.

### **Data Analysis**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the data in this study. Participants completed one of two electronic surveys resulting in the data used for this research. Quantitative data was analyzed through Qualtrics, exported in Excel, and organized into tables and charts used throughout the Methodology and Discussion

sections of this thesis. Qualitative data was analyzed by reading fill in the blank and free response questions and identifying common themes found in responses.

Data for the dance degree holders and musical theatre dance professionals was analyzed as a whole for each group. Musical theatre dance professionals were also separated and viewed by majors (musical theatre, dance, and acting). In addition, the participants' responses were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively, depending on the nature of the data collected.

### *Quantitative Data*

In addition to the general education information about the participants provided above, the quantitative data was analyzed based on the participants' perception of their career readiness, number and types of courses in their undergraduate programs, and perception of their knowledge and abilities. These questions began each section of the surveys and were the same on each survey for the two types of participants. Questions 1.7 and 1.8 on both surveys, regarding professionals in musical theatre dance provided comparative data between the two types of participants which was of high interest to the researcher.

### *Qualitative Data*

Each section of the surveys for both groups of participants included free response questions that were analyzed to create the qualitative data. These questions were focused on education and experiences the participants considered valuable, opportunities they desired, and additional training needed in the areas of technique, choreography and composition, and other additional courses they sought outside of their degree plan. The

questions were designed with the hope of gathering honest perspectives from dancers about their career readiness and educational experiences in musical theatre dance.

### **Summary**

In this chapter the researcher provided a detailed description of the methodology utilized throughout this survey-based research project. Details included information about the approval through the University of Northern Colorado IRB Board, distribution of the surveys, nature of the participants, and the methods used to analyze the data. Special attention was given to the specific design of the surveys and details about the educational background of the two groups of participants. Detailed findings and analysis of data from both groups surveyed using quantitative and qualitative methods can be found in the following Discussion chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to identify the necessary training and experiences that are vital for a dancer to achieve a professional career in musical theatre dance. The two surveys used in this study asked participants to analyze their educational experiences, identify areas of interest, describe the direction of continued studies, and evaluate their perceptions of career readiness in musical theatre dance. The two groups of participants were dance degree holders and musical theatre dance professionals. Variations in content of the two surveys existed to elicit more specific responses from each group of dancers. This chapter is organized to follow the four sections of both surveys: General Information, Technique, Choreography and Composition, and Additional Courses.

#### **General Information**

The questions in this section of both surveys were designed to gain information about the musical theatre dance jobs and careers these individuals have held, and whether they felt accomplished enough to seek jobs they desired. The questions in this section of the survey also asked participants about the general opinions they had about their overall training, experiences, and career readiness for the musical theatre dance professions.

#### *Dance Degree Holders*

When the dance degree holders were asked which musical theatre positions they had held, the outcome was below 50% for all possible positions. The highest percentage among all positions existed for the roles of performer and choreographer. Table 1 shows

the precise breakdown of dance degree holders and the jobs they held in professional musical theatre dance throughout their careers. Several participants held multiple jobs throughout their career which resulted in a total percentage larger than 100 percent.

Table 1

Jobs in Musical Theatre Dance Held by Dance Degree Holders

	Number of participants who held the job	Percent of participants who held the job
Performer	39	42
Dance Captain	16	17
Assistant Choreographer	20	22
Associate Choreographer	7	8
Choreographer	42	46

The numbers were notably higher when the participants were asked which musical theatre dance jobs/careers they felt proficient/accomplished enough to seek. Performer and choreographer were still the two highest career choices. However, in terms of being a choreographer, the majority of dance degree holders felt assistant choreographer was the job they felt most accomplished to seek. Table 2 shows the specific breakdown of how participants perceived their abilities in terms of seeking a job. Several participants related their abilities to multiple potential jobs which resulted in a total percentage larger than 100 percent.



Table 2

Jobs Dance Degree Holders Felt Proficient/Accomplished to Seek

	Number of participants who answered in the same way	Percent of participants who answered in the same way
Performer	56	61
Dance Captain	38	41
Assistant Choreographer	57	62
Associate Choreographer	42	46
Choreographer	54	59

In addition, seventy-nine (86%) of dance degree holders surveyed have been asked to collaborate on a musical theatre project. Of those who were asked, all but one participated. This participant mentioned that their decision not to participate was due to lack of interest.

When dance degree holders were asked if they had ever been offered a job or to do something related to musical theatre they did not feel qualified for, only thirty-one participants (34%) responded in the affirmative. When asked to describe for which task they needed additional training, an overwhelmingly popular response was “. . . choreographing a full musical.” Many indicated they needed additional assistance with staging smaller numbers within musicals that were primarily staged or blocked versus production style numbers, while others mentioned specific styles like tap, ballroom, partner work/lifts, and African style movement. One participant shared a story about a performance opportunity in which she was “. . . hired as a dancer en pointe and then asked to solo as a tap dancer in the same show.” This request surprised the dancer and she

felt unprepared for the opportunity and that the expectation of being an expert in several genres was outrageous.

### *Musical Theatre Dance Professionals*

The musical theatre dance professionals were asked the same questions about jobs they held and those they felt accomplished enough to seek. All percentages were higher in regard to musical theatre jobs held in comparison to the jobs held by the dance degree holders. For the musical theatre professionals surveyed, the most noted increase was in the positions of dance captain, assistant choreographer, and associate choreographer.

Table 3 shows the specific numbers and percentages. This group of participants also held multiple types of jobs which resulted in a total percentage larger than 100 percent.

Table 3

#### *Jobs in Musical Theatre Dance Held by Musical Theatre Dance Professionals*

	Number of participants who held the job	Percent of participants who held the job
Performer	79	96
Dance Captain	62	76
Assistant Choreographer	35	43
Associate Choreographer	19	23
Choreographer	51	62

These percentages did not change in a remarkable way when participants were asked about their perception of career readiness for these positions. The positions of assistant and associate choreographer showed the greatest increase. These coveted positions are primarily found in the Broadway community and the lead choreographers often select the same people for each show to fill them. Table 4 shows the specific

breakdown of how participants perceived their abilities in terms of seeking a job. Again, each participant selected multiple types of jobs which resulted in a total percentage larger than 100 percent.

Table 4

Jobs Musical Theatre Dance Professionals Felt Proficient/Accomplished to Seek

	Number of participants who answered in the same way	Percent of participants who answered in the same way
Performer	77	94
Dance Captain	65	79
Assistant Choreographer	62	76
Associate Choreographer	49	60
Choreographer	52	63

Three common themes emerged when reviewing the training, background, and experience that participants felt was most beneficial for having a successful career in musical theatre dance. These themes included: the need for a ballet background, on the job/professional experience, and training in a variety of dance genres. The ability to perform outside of a training program including summer stock, professional auditions, and other performance opportunities were consistent throughout the responses and considered important to career success. One participant stated, “Doing is always the most exceptional teacher.” Two participants mentioned not completing their degree because their professional experience was more valuable than their course work.

The concept of variety was consistently mentioned throughout the responses. When they talked about variety, the participants meant variety not only in teachers, choreographers, and dance genres, but also with types of opportunities. Other experiences

that were mentioned as valuable included having a mentor, participating in acting classes, training in singing, and the ability to read music.

### Technique

In this section of the survey, participants were asked to reflect on the dance technique course work they took in college. When asked which technique courses were the most valuable, one musical theatre dance professional stated, “I would say all techniques, I use them all.”

Dance degree holders in this survey were well-rounded and participated in multiple dance technique genres in their undergraduate education. The number of participants who took each genre of technique and corresponding percentages of each are seen in Table 5.

Table 5

Technique Courses Taken by Dance Degree Holders

	Number of participants who answered in the same way	Percent of participants who answered in the same way
Ballet	83	90
Modern	85	92
Jazz	69	75
Tap	37	40
Broadway Styles	23	25
Other	22	24

Overall, musical theatre dance professionals had a lower percentage of participation in dance technique courses with the exception of jazz dance and Broadway

dance styles. Table 6 shows the dance technique courses musical theatre dance professionals experienced in their undergraduate course work.

Table 6

Technique Courses Taken by Musical Theatre Dance Professionals

	Number of participants who answered in the same way	Percent of participants who answered in the same way
Ballet	67	82
Modern	46	56
Jazz	62	76
Tap	54	66
Broadway Styles	52	65
Other	18	22

The three dance genres in which dance degree holders participated the least as part of their undergraduate studies were: jazz, tap, and Broadway Styles. Fifty (54%) of dance degree holders surveyed sought outside technique training in tap, jazz or musical theatre dance for career readiness. Further analysis by genre follows below.

*Jazz Dance*

Of the dance degree holders surveyed, only twenty-five (27%) stated that their college or university offered higher level jazz technique courses. Twenty-two of those twenty-five (88%) participated in higher level jazz technique courses. However, sixty-four of the remaining sixty-seven respondents (96%) had an interest in higher level jazz courses as a part of their collegiate education even though they did not participate in them. Seventy participants (76%) believed that additional technique training in jazz dance would have been helpful for career readiness in musical theatre.

Sixty-two (76%) of musical theatre dance professionals surveyed took jazz dance technique classes in college. However, jazz is mentioned thirteen times in an open response question in which the researcher asked which additional dance technique courses would have been helpful for a career as a musical theatre performer. One of these performers specifically stated they would have enjoyed more variety when studying specific jazz dance styles.

### *Tap Dance*

Tap was one of two genres that was commonly named when participants were asked which dance technique education or training was most beneficial when pursuing a career in musical theatre dance. Even though thirty-seven (40%) of dance degree holders participated in a tap technique class in their undergraduate training, only ten (11%) stated that higher-level tap classes were offered by their college/university. All ten of those individuals enrolled in higher-level tap technique classes, but fifty-four (59%) said they had interest in taking an even higher-level tap course. Seventy (76%) of this same group agreed that additional tap technique training would have been helpful for musical theatre career readiness.

Only fifty-four (66%) of musical theatre dance professionals took a tap technique class in their college studies. However, seventeen (21%) of them mentioned needing more tap to prepare them for their career. One participant was very specific and asked for “. . . more and more advanced tap.”

### *Broadway Dance Styles*

The Broadway dance style was studied by fewer dance degree holders, making it the lowest percentage among the dance genres studied by this group. Only twenty-three

(25%) of the dance degree holders stated Broadway styles technique courses were even offered by their college/university. Only nine (10%) said their college/university offered a higher-level course in this style, and all nine of them participated in the course.

However, seventy-four (80%) dance degree holders said they were interested in Broadway styles technique courses as a part of their undergraduate dance education.

Only fifty-two (63%) of musical theatre dance professionals participated in a Broadway styles course in college. Musical theatre dance professionals noted a course with more repertoire and original choreography would have been helpful as part of their undergraduate education. Two participants specifically mentioned Fosse as a specific style of interest and one in which they needed training. Multiple participants stated the need and desire for having more specific styles and a greater variety of Broadway dance styles within their education.

### *Ballet*

In terms of ballet, one participant stated that, “No one style or technique [was preferred], but the ability to move between them [was important]. Though I do believe an advance understanding of ballet is essential for anyone seeking to be a professional.” Often considered a fundamental beginning for all other dance forms, ballet was the highest dance genre participated in by both groups of participants.

Eighty-three (90%) of dance degree holders studied ballet in their undergraduate dance program. The dance degree holders were not asked additional questions regarding their ballet training.

Sixty-seven (82%) of musical theatre dance professionals studied ballet in college. When asked which dance technique they found most beneficial when pursuing a

career in musical theatre dance, ballet was the genre mentioned most frequently. The inclusion of more ballet was mentioned thirteen times, and a need for more refined technique was noted three times when subjects were asked which courses would have been most helpful to have in an undergraduate education program to prepare for a career as a musical theatre performer.

### *Modern Dance*

Answers related to the modern genre showed the largest discrepancy between dance degree holders and musical theatre dance professionals in terms of their training. Dance degree holders participated in modern dance training most frequently, while musical theatre dancers participated in this genre least out of all dance genres named.

Eighty-five (92%) of dance degree holders participated in modern dance technique courses in their undergraduate dance programs. No other questions regarding modern dance technique were asked of dance degree holders.

Forty-six (56%) of musical theatre dance professionals participated in modern dance technique courses in their undergraduate programs. Modern dance was not mentioned when musical theatre dance professionals were asked about additional training or other beneficial dance technique experiences.

### *Other Dance Genres*

While only twenty-two (24%) dance degree holders commented that they participated in other technique genres than those described above, there was a great variety in other genres taught within dance degree programs. The list of other genres taught in collegiate dance programs included: African, ballroom, folk, hip hop, partnering, Scottish Highland, Bollywood, pointe, Bharatanatyam, Latin, Flamenco,



social dance, and Capoeira. The three most frequently taught dance genres from the preceding list were African, Latin, and hip hop.

Eighteen (22%) of musical theatre dance professionals participated in other dance genres than those previously discussed. Those dance genres included African, ballroom, Kathak, Capoeira, pointe, and Pilates. Ballroom was the most frequently appearing response.

When musical theatre dance professionals were asked what additional dance technique courses would have been most helpful to have in their undergraduate education to prepare them for a career as a musical theatre dance performer, the top three answers that went beyond the genres already listed were partnering, tumbling and acrobatics, and original choreography for popular Broadway shows. Partnering was mentioned eight times as a desired class by musical theatre dance professionals. One of these participants was specific and stated the importance of studying “. . . partnering—not just ballet—ballroom/swing/etc.” Another popular response was to receive training in tumbling and acrobatics. This type of movement training was not suggested among additional courses that should be taken by dance degree holders. Beyond technical training, many musical theatre dance professionals mentioned the need to build the skill of learning choreography quickly in an audition situation.

Outside of their collegiate education most musical theatre dance professionals mentioned participating in regular, continued technical dance training. Ballet and tap were the genres in which most subjects participated outside of their undergraduate education. Musical theatre dancers also sought out specific genres based on audition needs or the needs of specific shows. One musical theatre dancer recalled the need for hip

hop training because “. . . *In the Heights* became popular.” Several musical theatre dancers mentioned studying other specific styles such as Bollywood and African to prepare for upcoming opportunities and auditions.

### **Choreography and Composition**

In this section of the survey, participants were asked about their undergraduate course work and experiences with choreography and composition. Specific questions included which courses were offered or taken, experiences which were available, and which dance genres were included in the programming. Both groups of participants answered these questions.

#### *Dance Degree Holders*

Of the ninety-two dance degree holders surveyed only eighty-one (88%) took composition courses. Of these eighty-one, ten (12%) participated in only a level one composition course, thirty-seven (46%) took two levels of composition, eighteen (22%) experienced three levels, fifteen (19%) took four levels of composition at the undergraduate level, and one (1%) participant provided no specific detail.

One dance degree holder mentioned they only took “one basic choreography class” because “my focus was performance back then.” Participants who did not enroll in choreography courses mentioned they had opportunities to create work for performances or concerts with faculty feedback. Three specifically mentioned additional coursework and experience at the graduate level. Other specific creative experiences included producing their own senior concert which was thirty minutes long or that they took “. . . advanced choreography as part of the senior proficiency exam,” and a course “. . . focused on solo choreography.”

While there were several dance genres explored in choreography course work at the undergraduate level, modern/contemporary dance composition was studied most frequently. Sixty-nine (75%) of the dance degree holders stated that modern and/or contemporary dance was the genre usually focused on in undergraduate choreography classes. Six dancers stated the genre used in choreography course work was open to choice, or that all genres were included in choreography classes. Twelve dance degree holders (13%) listed ballet as the genre used in creative work in choreography classes, while ten participants (11%) mentioned jazz dance, and only two (2%) listed tap. Two other dance degree holders specifically mentioned musical theatre dance as one genre from a list of several genres explored and one participant commented there was a choreography “. . . course specifically geared towards musical theatre.” Another participant who listed only modern dance as a genre of focus remembered, “I once choreographed a tap dance for comp class and did not receive feedback for it.”

Of the eighty-two dance degree holders who participated in choreography course work in their undergraduate studies, seventy-two (88%) stated musical theatre dance was not addressed in their composition courses. The ten participants (12%) who said musical theatre dance was addressed in their choreography classes contributed a variety of responses when asked whether it was part of these classes. Three participants mentioned that when musical theatre dance was addressed in composition courses the primary emphasis was on style. Of the three who mentioned an emphasis on style, one remembered “. . . it was minimal, but we definitely discussed and studied the greats such as Fosse, and Robbins.” Another participant who mentioned style remembered there were “. . . composition assignments in the style of specific choreographers.” A different

participant recalled that even though musical theatre composition was addressed “. . . it was taught the same” as other dance genres addressed in the course. And only one participant recalled when choreographing, “There was always emphasis on the story that our dance told. Intent was the main focus for musical theatre dance.”

### *Musical Theatre Dance Professionals*

The musical theatre dance professionals’ survey had more open response questions in order to pinpoint areas of need in the current climate. However, questions asked of both groups produced answers that varied in different ways. Only thirty (37%) of musical theatre dance professionals surveyed indicated they took a composition course in college and thirty-five (43%) indicated no type of composition or improvisation experience at the undergraduate level. Musical theatre majors that did participate in choreography course work studied only one level, or the most basic level available within their programs. Most of those who did participate in composition courses primarily did so at the beginning level. Only four musical theatre dance professionals, who all pursued a dance major, stated they participated in four levels of composition.

One similarity between the dance degree holders and the musical theatre dance professionals was that modern dance was the genre on which most creative work was focused during composition course work. Twenty (24%) musical theatre dance professionals also listed modern dance as the genre on which their choreography classes were based. Five (6%) of the musical theatre dance professionals indicated musical theatre or Broadway dance styles as a genre on which creative work was focused. Four of these dancers were musical theatre majors and one was a dance major. Tap dance was not mentioned in any responses that related to studying or creating choreography. One

participant recalled that professors “. . . seemed less supportive of more classical styles and more supportive of the abstract.” This response implies a bias against several genres often seen in musical theatre choreography.

Ten (12%) of the musical theatre dance professionals responded that musical theatre dance was addressed in their composition course, but there was a wide range in responses when participants described how it was taught. Responses ranged from “. . . it wasn't something that was really focused on” to the “. . . whole course entirely focused on various types of musical theatre numbers.” One interesting response was:

We did have a course called Dance for the Musical Stage which was not focused on the creation of choreography, but rather [on] the reconstruction of the work of famous choreographers. So while we were not creating our own material, we were working to deconstruct various styles and teach them to our peers.

The idea of telling a story with dance was mentioned consistently and additional respondents felt that an exploration of character development, and learning to create in a way that would not interfere with vocals and the overall design elements such as the set and props were part of their choreography classes.

When asked which choreographic education, training, or experiences they found most beneficial when pursuing a career in musical theatre dance, musical theatre dance professionals responded in a number of ways. Many musical theatre dance professionals credited their choreography education as a major benefit in their career. One musical theatre dancer said, “. . . my senior thesis was on Kathleen Marshall and her choreography process. That helped tremendously with my storytelling through dance.” Another found value in other forms of teaching through composition and improvisation. However, another brought up the fact that “. . . student composition pieces taught me a lot

just from trial and error on my part. But I had to go out of my way to create some pieces that were more theatre-driven.”

Others identified deficits in their choreographic education, but still credited their academic institution. “I never received official training on choreography but learned a lot [from] assisting professors with different projects.” One participant whose collegiate program did not include a choreography course alleged that, “I so wish I could have had it! I have no confidence in my ability to choreograph because I was never trained.”

Another blamed their program and its offerings for their deficit, “I was never taught how to choreograph, take notes, do formation changes, etc. I would have loved if my college offered a class like that for theatre majors!”

Many musical theatre dance professionals credited their technical training before college, specifically in ballet and jazz, but did not mention any additional professional training in choreography or composition. One musical theatre dancer found “. . . taking musical theatre dance with various pros to be the most beneficial.” Other training considered important in the musical theatre dance profession included audition technique classes and courses in which students were taught an understanding of music.

It appeared professional and real-world experience was the most beneficial type of choreographic education, training, or experience in relation to being able to create musical theatre choreography. One respondent believed the best education was “Working in the field. Nothing can match the growth from working in shows. Be someone’s assistant if possible.” This comment highlighted the idea that being a part of the creative process on any level is valuable. Additionally, being a dance captain and having hands-on experience assistant choreographing and directing in non-professional productions

(primarily community and high school) supported that idea. This was true even when one was a performer working with professional choreographers to develop choreography skills. One musical theatre dance professional was specific and mentioned Stroman as their greatest influence. They replied that “. . . working with Susan Stroman [was an important experience]. Observing her every day for 8 weeks of rehearsal was an amazing master class in creative thinking and storytelling.” Many musical theatre dance professionals recognized their various professional experiences as performers, dance captains, assistants, and choreographers provided their best learning opportunities in regard to musical theatre choreography.

Musical theatre dance professionals held nothing back when responding about choreography or composition courses that would have been most helpful during their undergraduate education for career readiness in musical theatre. The participants’ responses revealed three major trends: genres explored, specific musical theatre components, and historical content.

Many musical theatre dance professionals expressed that the composition courses they took in college did not meet their professional needs in musical theatre due to the genres explored. The emphasis on modern dance in composition courses was seen as narrow and limiting by many. They recommended the inclusion of “. . . a practical choreography class as opposed to a class trying to teach innovative movement and how to create groundbreaking works of art.” Another individual supported this claim with the desire for “. . . comp courses that were not solely modern focused.” Many desired a specific course designed for jazz and musical theatre dance composition. A third participant stated “I would have loved a separate section of our composition class

devoted just to Musical Theatre. Ours was more modern based.” Some participants would have welcomed the opportunity to bring other genres and styles into the composition courses they did have. One musical theatre dance professional who also had a dance degree would have enjoyed “. . . the permission to interpret the assignment in jazz, tap, or MT styles.” Many felt they were discouraged from using musical theatre genres in their composition courses, while another dancer confirmed that feeling by wanting “. . . one [course] where theatre dance compositions or studies were allowed or encouraged.”

In response to being asked about desired composition courses, many musical theatre dance professionals would have liked components specific to musical theatre. These components included musical staging, numbers that require a high degree of acting, and working with a production team. However, musical staging was the concept mentioned most frequently. Knowing that dances in musical theatre productions do not stand on their own, one participant stated, “I would have loved a choreography/staging class. A class where we could stage a scene and a whole song.” Being “. . . given specific storytelling assignments would have been helpful. It’s one thing to come up with a dance, [but] another to come up with a dance that needs to serve a specific need in the context of a script.” Going even deeper into that idea, another individual desired “. . . courses tailored to working with ensembles and creating to support storylines and lead characters.” Choreographers have to coach their dancers and they need to know “. . . how to approach musical theatre choreography from an acting standpoint. It’s not just about doing the moves given, it’s having a purpose and character being what you’re doing.” Another concept unique to musical theatre versus concert dance was the ability to



choreograph transitions and movement through set changes. Musical theatre choreographers need

. . . a more practical course involving creating movement for musical theatre actors/singers who are less technically proficient as dancers. I would have also benefitted from a course geared towards marrying choreography with technical elements that designers create (such as costumes, props, lights, set).

Additionally, since musical theatre is a collaborative art form, the desire for “. . . greater training addressing all the other factors considered in choreographing that type of work- i.e. working with a director and meeting their vision—the collaborative elements.”

Another theme that emerged from the musical theatre dance professionals’ comments was the concept of history and process. One dancer specifically suggested taking a course which included “. . . studying past choreographers and not only their influence or style but dissecting their process.” This process should consist of “. . . studying the masters like Fosse, [and] Robbins not only from a historical standpoint, but analyzing their compositions.” One musical theatre dance professional would have enjoyed “. . . breaking down styles would have been a cool class. i.e. Jerome Robbins vs. Bob Fosse vs. Michael Bennet vs. Andy Blankenbuehler vs. Rob Ashford vs. Kathleen Marshall vs. Susan Stroman.” This would have been beneficial by “. . . preparing and training [us] for different genres. [Choreographers] from Fosse to DeMille.”

### **Additional Courses**

Of the ninety-two dance degree holders who began the survey, only eighty-one completed the fourth and final section of the survey. Participants were asked to comment on additional courses they experienced in undergraduate education and courses that would have been beneficial for career readiness for a career in musical theatre dance. Of the eighty-two musical theatre dance professionals who began the survey, only sixty-five

began and completed the final section. In this section of the survey, the researcher asked questions about undergraduate coursework in dance history, pedagogy, music, acting, and production.

Beyond technique and composition courses, undergraduate dance degrees often include music and production courses as well as opportunities for students to participate in electives of their choice. The researcher wanted to know which additional courses participants completed that were beneficial as well as their perception of career readiness. The following table shows the number of dance degree holders who participated in additional courses such as dance history, pedagogy, acting, production, anatomy and kinesiology, and music theory and/or appreciation. Table 7 displays the number and percentage of additional courses those surveyed took which were related to dance, but were outside the areas of technique and choreography. These were courses that dance degree holders participated in during their undergraduate studies.

Table 7

Additional College Courses Taken by Dance Degree Holders

	Number of participants who answered in the same way	Percent of participants who answered in the same way
Dance History	80	99
Pedagogy	66	81
Acting	27	33
Production	68	84
Anatomy and Kinesiology	77	95
Music Appreciation/ Theory	60	74

Only sixty-five musical theatre dance professionals began and completed the fourth and final section of the survey which was concerned with additional courses. These participants were asked similar questions about the added courses they took at the undergraduate level as well as outside training and experiences they found beneficial to their career readiness in musical theatre dance. Table 8 shows the number and percentage of courses related to dance, but which were outside of the areas of technique and choreography.

Table 8

Additional College Courses Taken by Musical Theatre Dance Professionals

	Number of participants who answered in the same way	Percent of participants who answered in the same way
Dance History	29	45
Pedagogy	17	26
Acting	55	85
Production	34	52
Music Appreciation/ Theory	51	78

Among those participants with a musical theatre degree, higher percentages were found for completion of acting and music courses, while a lower percentage of respondents studied dance history. In the following section, both groups of participants' responses will be discussed together.

#### *Dance History Courses*

Almost all, eighty (99%), of dance degree holders participated in a dance history course during their undergraduate education. However, not all dance history courses covered the same material. When asked if their dance history course covered jazz, tap,

and musical theatre history, twenty-one (26%) said none of those genres were discussed. Fifty-nine (73%) responded that jazz was included in their dance history course and only forty (49%) said that tap and musical theatre were covered in these same courses.

Of the dance degree holders surveyed, forty (49%), described their knowledge of jazz dance history as “Standard.” None of the participants selected “Not present” when asked about their content knowledge in jazz dance history. These percentages were much different for tap dance history. Twenty-nine (36%) of the dance degree holders described their knowledge of tap dance history as “Generic” and thirteen (16%) stated it was “Not present.” For musical theatre dance history, thirty-one (38%) described their knowledge of this form of dance history as “Standard,” twenty-eight (35%) as “Generic,” and ten (12%) as “Not present.” This leaves only twelve (15%) describing their knowledge of musical theatre dance history as “Detailed.” These statistics support the realization that the majority of dance degree holders (sixty-nine, which is 85%) said that more knowledge of history in jazz, tap, and musical theatre dance would be helpful in their career.

Of the twenty-nine musical theatre dance professionals who enrolled in a dance history course during their undergraduate studies, the researcher found that twenty-three (79%) studied jazz dance in these courses, while twenty (69%) experienced tap history, and sixteen (55%) learned about musical theatre in their dance history courses. Sixteen participants (20%) stated that neither jazz, tap, nor musical theatre were included in their dance history courses. Fifty-three (45%) of the musical theatre dance professionals described their knowledge of jazz dance history as “Standard.” While this percentage is similar to the dance degree holders’ responses, the percentages for tap and musical

theatre dance history were different between the two groups. For the musical theatre dance professionals, the tap numbers were higher because thirty-two (49%) described their knowledge of tap dance history as “Standard.” The biggest difference between the two groups existed when the researcher assessed their knowledge of musical theatre dance history. Thirty-two (49%) of the musical theatre dance professionals thought their knowledge of musical theatre dance history was “Detailed” with another twenty-one (32%) describing this type of knowledge as “Standard.” Even though differences existed between the two groups, 83% of all participants, dance degree holders and musical theatre dance professionals, agreed that more knowledge of history in jazz, tap, and musical theatre dance would have been helpful in their career.

Of the musical theatre dance professionals, those that experienced the lowest percentage of dance history courses were musical theatre majors. Only six (19%) of the thirty-one musical theatre degree recipients took a dance history course as part of their undergraduate education.

In summary, the perception of knowledge of the history of musical theatre dance genres such as tap, jazz, and Broadway styles was slightly higher among musical theatre dance professionals than for the dance degree holders despite the lower percentage of enrollment for the former group in a dance history course.

### *Pedagogy Courses*

In her survey, the researcher did not ask questions concerning how many dance pedagogy courses the participants took during their undergraduate course work, nor did she ask specific details about these courses. The participants were asked which additional

pedagogy courses would have been beneficial with the purpose of identifying areas of need or pedagogical components not covered in the courses they did take.

A wide range of responses were submitted to answer the above open-ended question. While a few participants thought pedagogy was a well-covered area in their undergraduate experience, many experienced no pedagogy courses or desired more similar content as they were only offered a basic level course. The participants made it clear that more variety within the pedagogy courses offered was desired, including one individual who thought that their pedagogy class only dealt with ballet and would have benefited from a variety of dance genres to be covered in their undergraduate courses.

Recurring themes that emerged from dance degree holders' responses concerning additional pedagogy courses which would have been beneficial centered around two major ideas: multiple or varied dance genres and preparedness for careers in education. Dance degree holders commonly stated that “. . . tap and jazz pedagogy would be super helpful for my current position.” Additionally, teaching dance and pedagogy for musical theatre was mentioned regularly. Dance degree holders also commonly responded with a desire for more content concerning dance in public education, assessment strategies, and teaching methods. These responses seemed more relevant to the career path of a K-12 classroom educator rather than applying to a career in musical theatre dance.

Musical theatre dance professionals were also asked questions about pedagogy, including how they learned to teach movement, would pedagogy content have been helpful to their work as a choreographer, and which content was beneficial in preparing them to teach movement to others. In response, musical theatre dance professionals indicated they largely gained their pedagogical knowledge through experiences outside of

their undergraduate education. Only four of the sixty-five participants who completed the survey mentioned various assignments within a choreography class and pedagogy course work as beneficial experiences. One of those participants elaborated by writing “. . . pedagogy courses help put the choreographer back in the shoes of the dancer. It’s easy to forget that other people won’t move exactly like you.”

In terms of learning pedagogy, the majority referenced being a teaching assistant in their dance studio where they grew up, or teaching themselves, and using trial and error as an opportunity to learn about pedagogy. Multiple participants responded specifically and described their experience as a dance captain or being thrown into a situation in which they needed to teach, using it as their pedagogical training ground. Fifty-three (82%) of the musical theatre dance professionals declared a dance pedagogy course would have been helpful to their work as a choreographer.

The musical theatre professionals thought that being a choreographer, dance captain, or dancer, were the most beneficial in preparing them to teach others dance movement. They often cited their experiences outside of a formal education environment, including serving as a dance captain, learning from professionals on the job, and “. . . just doing it.” Some musical theatre dance professionals even credited their experiences in speech class and real-life experiences such as waiting tables which helped them communicate with others and read the room. Learning by doing and assisting established choreographers were the most common responses throughout.

### *Acting Courses*

Only thirty-seven dance degree holders mentioned having any acting experiences or acting courses in which they participated during their undergraduate education. On-

campus opera or musical theatre productions were the most common performance experiences mentioned by this group which related to acting. Some cited specific classes geared toward the dance students, such as acting for dancers and movement for theatre.

Some participants' responses highlighted the separation between theatre and dance programming. These responses included, "I took acting for non-majors as an elective. It did not count towards my dance degree." Another dance degree holder recalled, "I auditioned for the musical, [but] the Dance Chair wouldn't allow me to accept the role I was offered because I was in Dance Ensembles."

Many participants lamented that they wished they ". . . had been required to take some sort of acting class" and that they were ". . . sure it would have furthered my depth of performance overall." When asked which additional acting courses or experiences would have been beneficial as part of their dance degree, the two most common responses were that any acting courses would have been helpful, especially those connected to Broadway dance and musical theatre. More specifically, the respondents would have appreciated learning how to use movement to project and develop a character. One dance degree holder would have enjoyed ". . . Broadway dance focused on character movement" and another desired ". . . acting for dancers as an introduction to acting and applying it specifically to dance and choreography."

Of the musical theatre dance professionals who attended college all but four participated in an acting course. Many also experienced acting intensives, ensembles, and participating in stage productions before they became professionals. The most frequently mentioned additional courses that would have been beneficial to a career in musical theatre dance included acting, specifically acting for musical theatre and stage combat.



One participant elaborated to state “Theatre dance is rooted in the acting. The more acting you can bring to it, the better.” This comment referred to “. . . the idea of being prepared for auditions, both in acting within the dance as well as reading sides.”

One musical theatre major believed their “. . . musical theatre program was very acting intensive. We received far more acting training than dance training.” This statement highlighted the variety within musical theatre programs and that the split focus of a musical theatre major can lead to deficiencies in an area. This participant felt a deficiency largely in the area of dance.

### *Production Courses*

There were no questions in these surveys concerning how many production courses respondents took as part of their undergraduate work, nor were they asked specific details about these courses. Of the eighty-one dance degree holders who did complete the survey, only one claimed no production experience or course work during their undergraduate education. The remaining eighty listed various courses specifically centered on dance production or stage craft. Of these, many participated in tech crew practicums, ran a crew for shows, or had lighting and costume experience.

One brave dance degree holder pointed out a negative experience regarding production course work. “We were offered a pitiful sound and lighting class for dancers [because it seemed] the dancers were considered too dumb to understand any of the technical aspects of theatre.” This dance degree holder continued on to comment “I remember wanting to take the lighting and sound for theatre majors and not being allowed [to] because I was a dance major.” These statements highlighted the separation

between dance and theatre program content, and the disparity in the quality of course work and experiences available within various programs.

Even though only one dance degree holder did not take production courses or have such experiences in his or her undergraduate career, all those surveyed expressed a desire for more production experiences. Lighting design work and practical experience were the most commonly named areas of production in which dance degree holders wanted more course work and experience. Stage management was the second most desired area of production in which dance degree holders felt they needed more background.

In their undergraduate course work, musical theatre dance professionals had very similar production practicum and run crew experiences as dance degree holders. However, several musical theatre dance professionals said they wanted the unique experience of learning how to roll out a Marley floor, an area in which most dance degree holders are experts. Training in lighting was the most requested area of experience desired among the musical theatre dance professionals.

The musical theatre dance professionals also requested additional experience in scenic and costume design, and opportunities to work with other university departments. One musical theatre dance professional elaborated, "I learned most of it on the job. I now would have liked to have taken more scenic design." Another desired ". . . more collaboration with other majors to mount a production." As a choreographer, one musical theatre dancer wanted more knowledge ". . . about period clothing and the movement possibilities with different period style clothes."

### *Music Courses*

There were no questions in this survey regarding how many music courses both groups of respondents took as part of their undergraduate work. Nor were they asked specific content details about such courses. Nevertheless, sixty-nine dance degree holders listed a music course or courses as part of their undergraduate dance degree. Only twelve of these respondents did not participate in any music course work in their undergraduate work. The courses taken included: Music Appreciation, Intro to Music, Rhythm Analysis, and Music for Dancers. Several dance degree holders mentioned they tested out of the music for dancers' courses due to previous knowledge gained before they entered undergraduate school. One dance degree holder specifically mentioned that after testing out of the basic level music course, that higher level options were not available to dance majors.

Even though the great majority (sixty-nine or 85%) of dance degree holders participated in music courses during their undergraduate studies, only one wrote "I feel confident in my career with the music courses I took." The remaining dance degree holders would have liked more music courses included in their degree plan which would have provided for greater career success. The dance degree holders would have also liked more experiences with specific musical components as part of their undergraduate studies. The components mentioned included: how to conduct, working with accompanists, and the ability to sight read. Many also wanted to learn more advanced music theory. Another common response, outside of general music courses, was a desire for piano courses or the ability to become proficient on an instrument.

In the fourth section of the survey, the variety within dance degrees and availability of elective courses led to a wide range of survey responses. Here, the dance degree holders spoke with candor and honesty about their perceived career readiness and courses or experiences they still desired with respect to their background in music. Several of these participants wrote about their inability to enroll in particular courses or participate in productions based on their major or program requirements.

The musical theatre dance professionals had a wide variety of musical experiences, including theory, musical theatre history, ear training, sight reading, voice lessons, and singing within choirs and ensembles. Musical theatre majors had considerably more musical experience and course work in their undergraduate education than those with other majors such as dance and acting. Dance and acting majors indicated they would have found course work in piano and music theory beneficial for career readiness. Additionally, many wished for private voice lessons.

The musical theatre dance professionals commented in detail and expressed their thoughts and feelings about their musical knowledge and education. Two respondents noted that, “. . . knowing music theory has been invaluable” and “. . . knowing how to speak to a music director is crucial” as a musical theatre dance professional. Another confirmed that their music courses “. . . were the hardest classes I took in college, but I believe they have been very helpful in my understanding of music composition and phrasing.” Several also stated that choral singing, the ability to sing in an ensemble setting, and singing parts were very valuable and marketable in an audition setting.

In regard to music, one musical theatre dance professional who received an acting degree specified that “Most of my training was done outside of the classroom on my own

time.” Vocal coaching and private voice lessons were the most common form of additional training musical theatre dance professionals sought. Another common suggestion was piano training, and specifically to brush up on music theory knowledge.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This research study was conducted to identify the necessary training and experiences that are vital for a dancer to achieve a professional career in musical theatre dance. The final chapter of this thesis restates the research questions, summarizes the results, discusses limitations to the study, and provides recommendations for further research.

#### **The Research Questions and Methods**

The purpose of this study was to identify necessary education and experiences for dancers who wish to pursue a career in musical theatre dance and describe the content they should be studying. This project surveyed two groups of individuals based on their education and experiences. These were individuals with dance degrees, and those working professionally in musical theatre as dancers or choreographers. The essential questions addressed in this study were:

- Q1     What musical theatre dance content is currently being offered in undergraduate dance education programs?
- Q2     What courses should be included in an undergraduate dance education to improve career readiness for work in musical theatre?
- Q3     What education and experience do professional dancers working in musical theatre dance careers have that enables them to be effective?
- Q4     What curriculum should be included in an undergraduate dance program focused on preparing performers and choreographers for careers in professional musical theatre?

In the two surveys, participants were asked questions in four categories: general information, technique, choreography and composition, and additional courses. These questions were designed to determine which undergraduate courses the participants took, their perception of career readiness in musical theatre dance, and added courses which could improve readiness for a successful career. The responses were analyzed quantitatively or qualitatively depending on the type of question asked.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The researcher discovered there is great variety in musical theatre dance content currently being offered in undergraduate dance programs. Some programs offered higher level course work in tap, jazz, and Broadway styles, while other dance programs did not offer those genres at all. Dance history courses also included a wide variety of content, but some of these courses did not include musical theatre genres. Musical theatre dance choreography is not currently offered as part of the university dance curricula, and, in many cases, dancers are not encouraged to compose in those genres. The musical theatre dance genres of tap, jazz, and Broadway styles were not consistently included in an undergraduate dance education. Even when these genres were included there was little consistency in the exact content being offered across different collegiate programs.

Some participants experienced high levels of career readiness for the musical theatre dance professions after participation in undergraduate degree programs in dance or musical theatre. Others felt they were ready for a career as a musical theatre dancer without completing a degree. Thus, there seemed to be no clear educational path for musical theatre dancers, and the great majority of participants sought outside training and experiences to supplement their undergraduate education. The great variety in

educational programming and the amount of outside experience and training participants reported led the researcher to conclude she could not totally credit the degree programs for the career success.

### **Limitations to the Study**

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the research study. Many individuals emailed the researcher with words of support about the project, but some did not complete the survey. The number who completed the survey might have been higher if there had been a more personal reason or benefit for participating.

This survey was unintentionally biased towards musical theatre dance professionals who earned undergraduate degrees or those who participated in a collegiate program of some kind. While there were questions regarding personal experiences or additional coursework appropriate for musical theatre professionals who did not complete a degree program, the majority of the questions related to undergraduate course work. A different line of questioning might have elicited valuable information from individuals working in the musical theatre dance professions who did not seek degrees and their reasoning behind that choice. This meant valuable responses from a section of the musical theatre dance community might not have been included in this study. Additionally, their opinions and perceptions about collegiate programs might have provided valuable data for consideration.

Participants included themselves in either category of the survey—as dance degree holders or musical theatre dance professionals. The researcher did not require proof that responders had a degree in dance, or the level at which they worked professionally. Neither was information collected about active years of study, the year the



dance degree holders graduated, or the number of years they had been active in the musical theatre dance professions. The fact that the participants may have been recent graduates or graduates from decades prior could possibly have skewed the quantitative data about courses taken and those offered.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study resulted in some interesting future considerations regarding musical theatre dance technique, composition, and supporting coursework at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The researcher found musical theatre dance professionals wanted more technique classes, but could not determine the number of classes they were able to take or the levels of the classes available in their undergraduate programs.

Broadway styles was the term used in this study to describe musical theatre dance genres. However, this term is not officially defined or clarified by the community at large and could be taught in a variety of ways at various collegiate institutions. Further research could be done to specifically identify which choreographers, styles, and material is covered in Broadway styles technique and history courses at the undergraduate level.

The identification of a need for specific course work for musical theatre dance professionals begs the question of who would be qualified to teach these courses if they were offered. Currently there are limited options for higher education in the genre of musical theatre dance. Research and curriculum development of master's and doctoral level coursework in musical theatre dance is an undeveloped aspect of this educational area. Further research could include interviewing individuals teaching musical theatre dance courses at the collegiate level to understand their experience and training to qualify for such positions.

## **Final Thoughts**

This study was developed from the researcher's curiosity about the education and training needed to be a musical theatre dance professional. This study was also created to identify the courses currently being offered in various undergraduate degree plans and the experience and training which was being sought outside of university programs. This study successfully identified the need for further research and development of undergraduate programming for musical theatre dance courses in order to better create career readiness for musical theatre dancers.

The researcher did not anticipate the overwhelming participation and support she received from the dance community at large. In addition to the dance degree holders and musical theatre professionals who participated in the survey and shared their overall impressions, there were also individuals who were interested in and excited about the project, but did not fit in either category. At the completion of the survey, one dance degree holder realized that their "... undergraduate degree was extraordinarily narrow." One musical theatre dance professional stated this research is "... very important these days. Some people in the dance world don't see the value in musical theatre." Another reflected that this survey "... really pointed out the holes in musical theatre programs."

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APPENDIX A  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTS

**Title: “To Get a Job in a Broadway Chorus, Go into your Dance:” Education for Careers in Musical Theatre Dance**

**A. Purpose**

1. The aim of this research is to examine the education required and explore the educational challenges for dancers pursuing professional performing and choreography careers in musical theatre. The project will attempt to answer the following questions: 1) What musical theatre dance content is currently being offered in undergraduate dance education programs? 2) What courses should be included in an undergraduate dance education to improve career readiness for work in musical theatre? 3) What education and experience do professional dancers working in musical theatre dance careers have that enables them to be effective? 4) What curriculum should be included in an undergraduate dance program focused on preparing performers and choreographers for careers in professional musical theatre?

This study will use quantitative methods to describe the number of types of undergraduate courses offered and taken by dance degree holders. In addition, a qualitative analysis will be used to describe content included in the education of an individual with a dance degree that prepared them for employment in musical theatre dance. The qualitative analysis will also be used to describe further training or content the same individuals would recommend for success in the musical theatre field. As part of a graduate thesis project, the goal of the research will be to assist the researcher in advocating for musical theatre dance courses in collegiate dance programs.

Data collection will be done in one semester by surveying two groups of individuals. The first group will be individuals who have earned an undergraduate degree in dance. The second group of participants are dancers working professionally as performers and choreographers in musical theatre. All data will be collected by using surveys distributed and collected electronically. The data from this survey will be used to answer the research questions as noted above.

2. This thesis project best first into the expedited category because it will be using electronic surveys as the sole method of gathering data. The participants in this study will be over eighteen years of age, and the results of the survey will be kept confidential and password protected. This study presents no more than minimal risk to the participants involved.

**B. Methods**

1. Participants  
The potential participants for this study are individuals who have completed an undergraduate degree in dance. Many of the participants will be graduates or candidates for graduation from the University of Northern Colorado's Dance



Education program or members of the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO). Individuals currently working professionally as musical theatre dancers and choreographers will be found through Actors Equity Association, social media, and trade publication postings. All potential participants will be provided with a description of the study and a link to an online survey. All those who agree to take part in the surveys will be directed to an electronic consent form prior to beginning the survey. Participation in the study is voluntary and all responses will be kept confidential. The estimated sample size for this survey is 100 participants.

## 2. Data Collection Procedures

- a. Electronic survey of dance degree holders. All participants in the study will be emailed an electronic survey and will be asked to complete each question. The survey will include a total of 53 questions that range from multiple-choice (31), to fill in the blank (13), and short answer (9). The multiple choice and fill in the blank questions will focus on collegiate course offerings, careers qualified for, and careers held, whereas the short answer questions will focus on additional training needed and effects of training on career readiness. The proposed survey will be administered using Qualtrics and data will be kept on the researcher's computer in password-protected files.
- b. Electronic survey of musical theatre dance professionals who are individuals working as choreographers or performers in professional musical theatre. All participants in the study will be emailed an electronic survey and will be asked to complete each question. The survey will include a total of 42 questions that range from multiple-choice (15), to fill in the blank (8), and short answer (19). The multiple-choice questions will focus on the subjects' collegiate course offerings and careers held. Short answer questions will focus on career readiness afforded through their training, personal experiences, and perceptions of additional educational needs. The proposed survey will be administered using Qualtrics and data will be kept on the researcher's computer in password-protected files.

## 3. Data Analysis Procedures

The method of analysis used in this project will be both quantitative and qualitative. For the quantitative analysis, the researcher will provide a description of the numbers of types of courses taken by those with careers in some aspect of musical theatre. The numbers presented in the thesis will represent the number of respondents who have taken a particular type of dance course such as tap dance or choreography. The qualitative analysis will be used to describe themes that emerge from the respondents' answers to the fill in the blank or short answer questions. The themes discovered through the qualitative analysis will help the researcher answer the essential questions posed above and which are integral to this study. Selections from the survey and short answer responses will be included in the thesis but will not compromise the confidentiality of participants involved

in the study because a numeric code or pseudonym will be used to identify subjects.

#### 4. Data Handling Procedures

After data is collected, it will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home with only the researcher having access. Electronic data, survey responses, and notes will be password protected. Consent forms will be held for three years in a locked file cabinet in Crabbe Hall, Room 308 at the University of Northern Colorado in the office of Dance Education Master of Arts co-coordinator, Christy O'Connell-Black.

### **C. Risks, Discomforts and Benefits**

1. The risks associated with this research are no more than what the potential participant would experience in everyday life. For example, those taking this survey may feel they cannot complete the survey in one sitting, but will be made aware that they are able to pause and save progress at any time during the survey process and return to complete the survey later. Completed surveys will be coded numerically and pseudonyms will be used in any presentations or written materials based on this project; therefore, there is no risk of confidentiality breaches for the participants. Other possible risks may be associated with the emotional connection to answering opinion based survey questions. Questions have been worded in an unbiased way that will allow the participant to answer honestly. Although it will be recommended to complete the entire survey, participants will have the option to skip a question if it causes anxiety or emotional stress in any way.
2. The potential benefits for the participants outweigh the risks. Participants will reflect on valuable educational and professional experiences when responding. This reflection process may deepen their artistic processes and understanding. There may be additional benefits to the dance community by performing this research. This research may be used to advocate for higher learning institutions to expand course offerings in musical theatre dance content.

### **D. Costs and Compensations**

The only cost to the researcher and participants will be loss of time. No other costs are associated with this project and no compensation will be given to the researcher or participants involved in this study.

### **E. Grant Information**

There are no grants associated with this project.



*Institutional Review Board*

DATE: November 1, 2018

TO: Lauran Stanis

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1329507-1] "To Get a Job in a Broadway Chorus, Go into your Dance:"  
Education for Careers in Musical Theatre Dance

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: November 1, 2018

EXPIRATION DATE: November 1, 2022

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

*Lauran -*

*Thank you for your patience with the UNC IRB process. Your application, materials and protocols are clear and thorough.*

*Please update the contact information in your consent form regarding mistreatment as a research participant as follows before use in your research, "...Nicole Morse, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.'*

*Otherwise, your application and materials are verified/approved exempt and you may begin participant recruitment and data collection.*

*Best wishes with your research and don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns.*

*Sincerely,*

*Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair*

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or [nicole.morse@unco.edu](mailto:nicole.morse@unco.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORMS



Institutional Review Board

**CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH**  
**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO**  
**DANCE DEGREE HOLDERS**

**Thesis Title:** “To Get a Job in a Broadway Chorus, Go into your Dance:” Education for Careers in Musical Theatre Dance

**Researcher:** Lauran Stanis, Graduate Student at the University of Northern Colorado

**Contact Information:** 214-417-7562, Lauran.Stanis@gmail.com

**Research Advisor:** Dr. Sandra Minton, University of Northern Colorado,  
sandra.minton@unco.edu

You are being asked to take part in a research study that examines education for career readiness in musical theatre dance professions. I am asking you to consent to being a participant because you hold an undergraduate degree in dance. I am looking for honest opinions on the perception of your career readiness for musical theatre dance professions. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you have before agreeing to take part in the study.

**What the study is about:** The aim of this research is to examine the education required and explore the educational challenges for dancers pursuing professional performing and choreography careers in musical theatre. The project will attempt to answer the following questions: 1) What musical theatre dance content is currently being offered in undergraduate dance education programs? 2) What courses should be included in an undergraduate dance education to improve career readiness for work in musical theatre? 3) What education and experience do professional dancers working in musical theatre dance careers have that enables them to be effective? 4) What curriculum should be included in an undergraduate dance program focused on preparing performers and choreographers for careers in professional musical theatre?

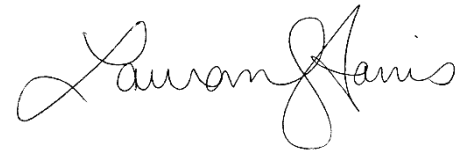
**Risks:** The risks for participation in this study are no more than those normally encountered while taking a survey or filling out a questionnaire. You will be asked to fill out a 53-question electronic survey that includes both multiple-choice and free response questions. The estimated time needed to complete this survey is 30 minutes. Participants are able to stop the survey at any time, save the responses, and return to the survey later. Other than possible fatigue, there are no foreseen risks involved.

**Your answers will be confidential:** Responses will be submitted in Qualtrics where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Surveys will be coded numerically and pseudonyms will be used in any presentation or written materials based on this project. No actual names will be used. Your responses will remain confidential. All consent forms pertaining to this study will be stored in a locked cabinet in Crabbe Hall, room 308, the Office of Dance Education co-coordinator Christy O'Connell-Black. The notes and other documents will be destroyed after completion of this thesis.

**Taking part is voluntary:** Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

**If you have questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Lauran Stanis. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me using the information listed above. Please retain one copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for assisting me in my research. Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lauran Stanis". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the "Sincerely," text.



**CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH**  
**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO**  
**DANCE DEGREE HOLDERS**

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**Researcher:** Lauran Stanis, Graduate Student at the University of Northern Colorado

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**Research Advisor:** Dr. Sandra Minton, University of Northern Colorado,  
sandra.minton@unco.edu

**Participation is voluntary.** Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future references. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

*This consent form will be kept for at least three years beyond the end of the study and will be destroyed afterward. This study was approved by the IRB on November 1, 2018.*

---

*Participant's Signature*

---

*Participant's Full Name*





**CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH**  
**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO**  
**MUSICAL THEATRE DANCE PROFESSIONALS**

**Thesis Title:** “To Get a Job in a Broadway Chorus, Go into your Dance:” Education for Careers in Musical Theatre Dance

**Researcher:** Lauran Stanis, Graduate Student at the University of Northern Colorado

**Contact Information:** 214-417-7562, Lauran.Stanis@gmail.com

**Research Advisor:** Dr. Sandra Minton, University of Northern Colorado,  
[sandra.minton@unco.edu](mailto:sandra.minton@unco.edu)

You are being asked to take part in a research study that examines education for career readiness in musical theatre dance professions. I am asking you to consent to being a participant because you work in a musical theatre dance profession as a choreographer or performer. I am looking for honest opinions on the perception of your experiences and education that prepared you for musical theatre dance professions. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you have before agreeing to take part in the study.

**What the study is about:** The aim of this research is to examine the education required and explore the educational challenges for dancers pursuing professional performing and choreography careers in musical theatre. The project will attempt to answer the following questions: 1) What musical theatre dance content is currently being offered in undergraduate dance education programs? 2) What courses should be included in an undergraduate dance education to improve career readiness for work in musical theatre? 3) What education and experience do professional dancers working in musical theatre dance careers have that enables them to be effective? 4) What curriculum should be included in an undergraduate dance program focused on preparing performers and choreographers for careers in professional musical theatre?

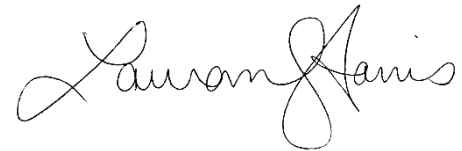
**Risks:** The risks for participation in this study are no more than those normally encountered while taking a survey or filling out a questionnaire. You will be asked to fill out a 42-question electronic survey that includes both multiple-choice and free response questions. The estimated time needed to complete this survey is 30 minutes. Participants are able to stop the survey at any time, save the responses, and return to the survey later. Other than possible fatigue, there are no foreseen risks involved.

**Your answers will be confidential.** Responses will be submitted in Qualtrics where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Surveys will be coded numerically and pseudonyms will be used in any presentation or written materials based on this project. No actual names will be used. Your responses will remain confidential. All consent forms pertaining to this study will be stored in a locked cabinet in Crabbe Hall, room 308, the Office of Dance Education co-coordinator Christy O'Connell-Black. The notes and other documents will be destroyed after completion of this thesis.

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**Research Advisor:** Dr. Sandra Minton, University of Northern Colorado,  
[sandra.minton@unco.edu](mailto:sandra.minton@unco.edu)

**Participation is voluntary.** Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future references. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

*This consent form will be kept for at least three years beyond the end of the study and will be destroyed afterward. This study was approved by the IRB on November 1, 2018.*

---

*Participant's Signature*

---

*Participant's Full Name*

APPENDIX C  
RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

## Survey of Dance Degree Holders

### Section 1: General Information

1. What degree in dance have you earned?

- ☐ BFA
- ☐ BA
- ☐ BS
- ☐ Other. Please name. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What was your major?

- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Dance Education
- ☐ Dance History
- ☐ Other. Please name. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did your degree have an emphasis?

- ☐ Yes. Please name. \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ No

4. Did you earn a minor?

- ☐ Yes. Please name. \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ No

5. (Optional) Where did you receive your undergraduate degree? \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of institution will not be used in presentation of research or in the written thesis)

6. Please list any additional degrees. \_\_\_\_\_

7. What jobs in professional musical theatre dance have you held? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Performer
- ☐ Dance Captain
- ☐ Assistant Choreographer
- ☐ Associate Choreographer
- ☐ Choreographer

## Survey of Dance Degree Holders

8. What jobs or careers in musical theatre do you feel proficient/accomplished to seek?  
(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Performer
- ☐ Dance Captain
- ☐ Assistant Choreographer
- ☐ Associate Choreographer
- ☐ Choreographer

9. In your professional experience, have you ever been asked to collaborate on a musical theatre project?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A. If yes, did you participate?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

B. If no, why didn't you participate?

10. Throughout your career in dance, what training or experience with musical theatre dance would have been advantageous?

11. Have you ever been offered a job or been asked to do something musical theatre related that you felt you weren't qualified for?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A. If yes, please describe the task for which you felt you needed additional training.

**Please continue to the next section of the survey.**

## Survey of Dance Degree Holders

### Section 2: Technique

1. Please indicate which of the dance genres you studied in college.

- ☐ Ballet
- ☐ Modern
- ☐ Jazz
- ☐ Tap
- ☐ Broadway Styles
- ☐ Other. Please list and describe any other dance genres you studied:  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. At your college/university, were higher level (400 level or higher) courses offered in jazz dance?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A. If yes, did you participate in higher level jazz dance courses?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

B. If no, would you have had an interest in a higher-level jazz dance course in your collegiate education?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. At your college/university, were higher level (400 level or higher) courses offered in tap dance?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A. If yes, did you participate in higher level tap dance courses?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

B. If no, would you have had an interest in a higher-level tap dance course in your collegiate education?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

## Survey of Dance Degree Holders

4. At your college/university, were Broadway styles/musical theatre dance technique courses offered?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A. If yes, were higher level (400 level or higher) Broadway styles/musical theatre dance technique courses offered?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, did you participate in higher level Broadway styles/musical theatre dance technique courses?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

B. If no, would you have had an interest in Broadway styles/musical theatre dance technique courses?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. Would additional technique training in jazz dance have been helpful for career readiness in musical theatre?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Would additional technique training in tap dance have been helpful for career readiness in musical theatre?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. Did you seek any outside technique training in tap, jazz, or musical theatre dance for career readiness?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A. If yes, describe:

**Please continue to the next section of the survey.**



## **Survey of Dance Degree Holders**

### **Section 3: Choreography and Composition**

1. Please indicate which choreography and composition courses you took in college.

- ☐ Improvisation
- ☐ Composition

2. If you were enrolled in dance composition courses in college, please describe approximately how many levels of dance composition you studied.

3. In your composition courses, on what genres of dance was the creative work focused?

4. Was musical theatre dance addressed in your composition courses?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A. If yes, how was it taught differently?

**Please continue to the next section of the survey.**

## Survey of Dance Degree Holders

### Section 4: Additional Courses

1. Please indicate which of the following courses you took in college.

- ☐ Dance History
- ☐ Pedagogy
- ☐ Acting
- ☐ Production
- ☐ Anatomy and Kinesiology
- ☐ Music Appreciation and/or Theory

2. Which of the following genres were included in your dance history courses? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Jazz
- ☐ Tap
- ☐ Musical theatre
- ☐ None of the above

3. How would you describe your knowledge of jazz dance history?

- ☐ Not present
- ☐ Generic
- ☐ Standard
- ☐ Detailed

4. How would you describe your knowledge of tap dance history?

- ☐ Not present
- ☐ Generic
- ☐ Standard
- ☐ Detailed

5. How would you describe your knowledge of musical theatre dance history?

- ☐ Not present
- ☐ Generic
- ☐ Standard
- ☐ Detailed

## Survey of Dance Degree Holders

6. Would more knowledge of history in jazz, tap, and musical theatre dance be helpful in your career?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. What additional pedagogy courses would have been beneficial to include in your dance degree?

8. Please list any acting courses or experiences you participated in during your undergraduate education.

9. What additional acting courses or experiences would have been beneficial to include in your dance degree?

10. Please list any production courses or experiences you participated in during your undergraduate education. Ex.: practicum, run crew, build crew, design, stagecraft.

11. What additional production courses or experiences would have been beneficial to include in your dance degree?

12. Please list any music courses you took during your undergraduate education. Ex.: theory, history, appreciation.

13. What additional music courses would have been beneficial to include in your dance degree?

**Thank you for completing this survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated.**

## Survey of Musical Theatre Dance Professionals (performers and choreographers)

### Section 1: General Information

1. What degree have you earned?

- ☐ BFA
- ☐ BA
- ☐ BS
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other. Please name. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What was your major?

- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Theatre
- ☐ Musical Theatre
- ☐ Other. Please name. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did your degree have an emphasis?

- ☐ Yes. Please name. \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ No

4. Did you earn a minor?

- ☐ Yes. Please name. \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ No

5. (Optional) Where did you receive your undergraduate degree? \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of institution will not be used in presentation of research or in the written thesis)

6. Please list any additional degrees. \_\_\_\_\_

7. What jobs in professional musical theatre dance have you held? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Performer
- ☐ Dance Captain
- ☐ Assistant Choreographer
- ☐ Associate Choreographer
- ☐ Choreographer

**Survey of Musical Theatre Dance Professionals  
(performers and choreographers)**

8. What jobs or careers in musical theatre do you feel accomplished to seek? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Performer
- ☐ Dance Captain
- ☐ Assistant Choreographer
- ☐ Associate Choreographer
- ☐ Choreographer

9. What training, background, or experience has been most beneficial to your career in musical theatre dance?

10. If you were to seek a higher degree opportunity, what type of degree program would interest you most?

**Please continue to the next section of the survey.**

## **Survey of Musical Theatre Dance Professionals (performers and choreographers)**

### **Section 2: Technique**

1. Please indicate which of the dance genres you studied in college.

- ☐ Ballet
- ☐ Modern
- ☐ Jazz
- ☐ Tap
- ☐ Broadway Styles
- ☐ Other. Please list and describe any other dance genres you studied:  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What dance technique course(s) would have been most helpful to have in your undergraduate education to prepare you for a career as a musical theatre performer?

3. What additional dance technique training did you seek outside of collegiate education?

4. What dance technique education or training did you find most beneficial when pursuing a career in musical theatre dance?

**Please continue to the next section of the survey.**

## **Survey of Musical Theatre Dance Professionals (performers and choreographers)**

### **Section 3: Choreography and Composition**

1. Please indicate which choreography and composition courses you took in college.

- ☐ Improvisation
- ☐ Composition
- ☐ None

2. If you were enrolled in dance composition courses in college, please describe approximately how many levels of dance composition you studied.

3. In your composition courses, what genres of dance were created?

4. Was musical theatre dance addressed in your composition courses?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A. If yes, how was it taught differently?

5. What choreography education, training, or experience did you find most beneficial when pursuing a career in musical theatre dance?

6. What choreography or composition courses would have been most helpful to have in your undergraduate education to prepare you for a career in musical theatre dance?

7. What is your process for creating musical theatre choreography?

**Please continue to the next section of the survey.**

## **Survey of Musical Theatre Dance Professionals (performers and choreographers)**

### **Section 4: Additional Courses**

1. Please indicate which of the following courses you took in college.

- ☐ Dance History
- ☐ Pedagogy
- ☐ Acting
- ☐ Production
- ☐ Music Appreciation and/or Theory
- ☐ None

2. Which of the following genres were included in your dance history courses? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Jazz
- ☐ Tap
- ☐ Musical theatre
- ☐ None of the above

3. How would you describe your knowledge of jazz dance history?

- ☐ Not present
- ☐ Generic
- ☐ Standard
- ☐ Detailed

4. How would you describe your knowledge of tap dance history?

- ☐ Not present
- ☐ Generic
- ☐ Standard
- ☐ Detailed

5. How would you describe your knowledge of musical theatre dance history?

- ☐ Not present
- ☐ Generic
- ☐ Standard
- ☐ Detailed



**Survey of Musical Theatre Dance Professionals  
(performers and choreographers)**

6. Would more knowledge of history in jazz, tap, and musical theatre dance be helpful in your career?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. How did you learn how to teach dance movement to others?

8. Would a dance pedagogy course have been helpful as a choreographer?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. As a choreographer, dance captain, or dancer, what education, training, or experience have you found to be most beneficial in preparing you to teach others dance movement?

10. Please list any acting courses or experiences you participated in during your undergraduate education.

11. What additional acting courses or experiences would have been beneficial to a career in musical theatre dance?

12. Please list any production courses or experiences you participated in during your undergraduate education. Ex.: practicum, run crew, build crew, design, stagecraft.

13. What additional production courses or experiences would have been beneficial to a career in musical theatre dance?

14. Please list any music courses you took during your undergraduate education. Ex.: theory, history, appreciation.

15. What music courses have been most beneficial when pursuing a career in musical theatre dance?

16. What additional music training did you seek?

**Thank you for completing this survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated.**